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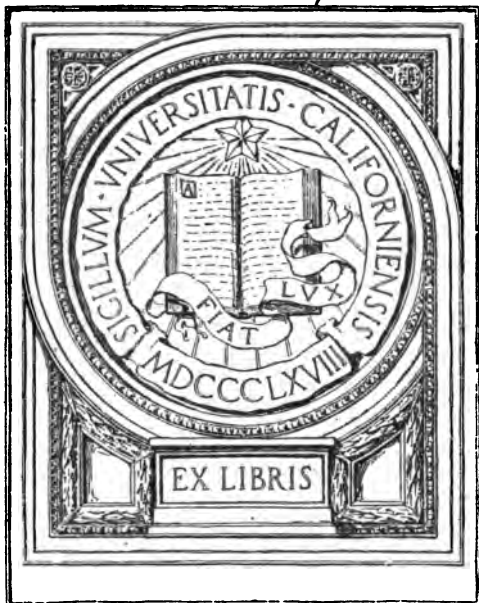


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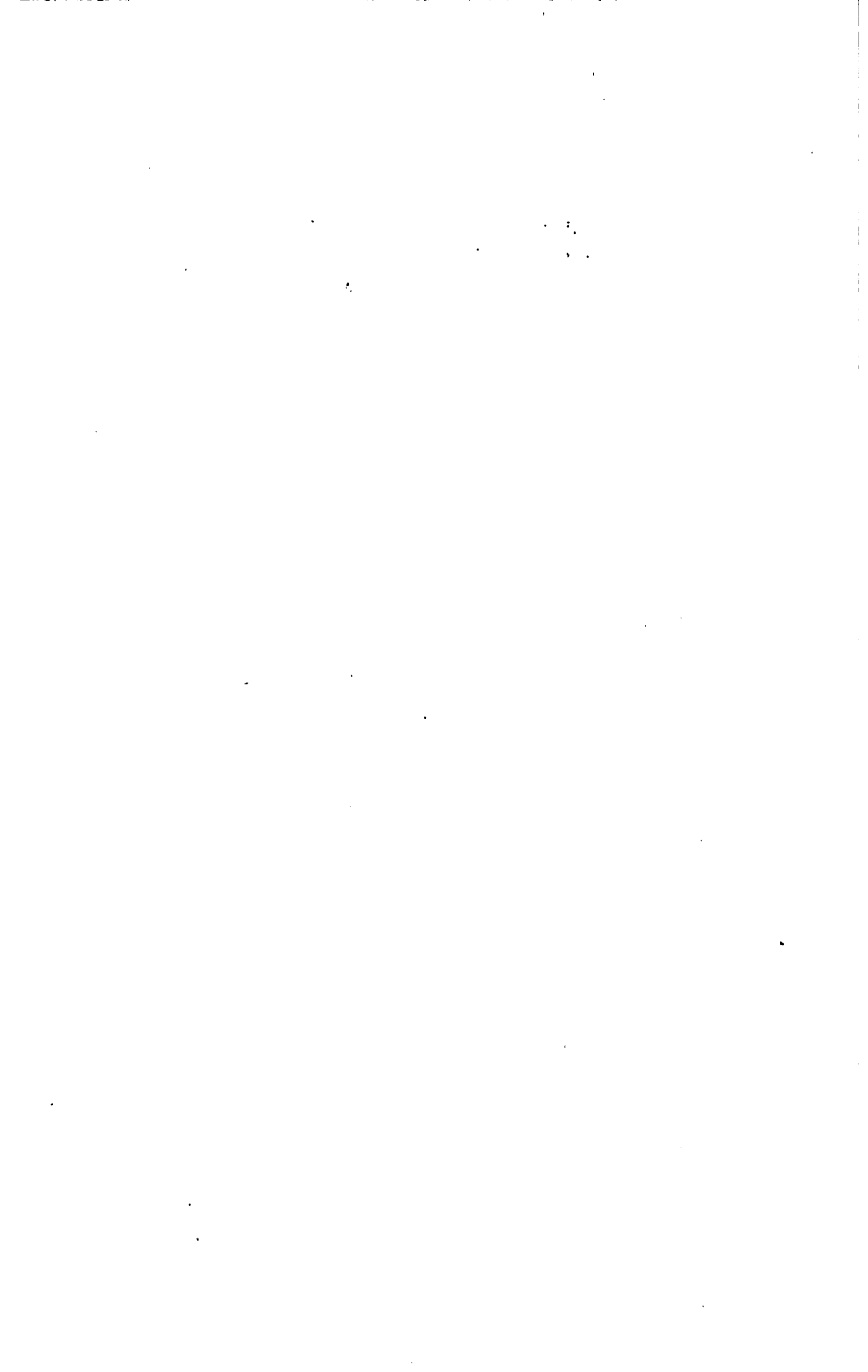
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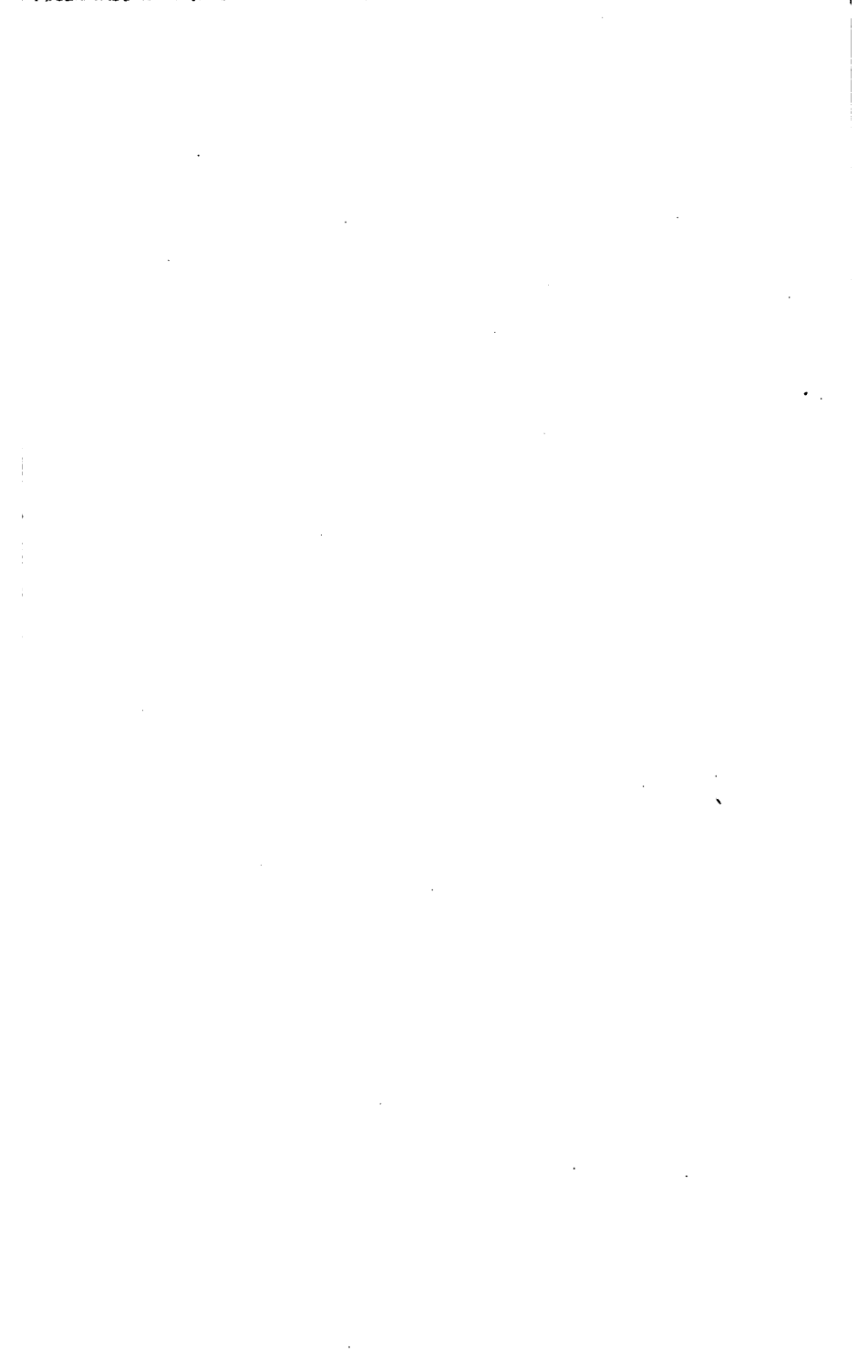


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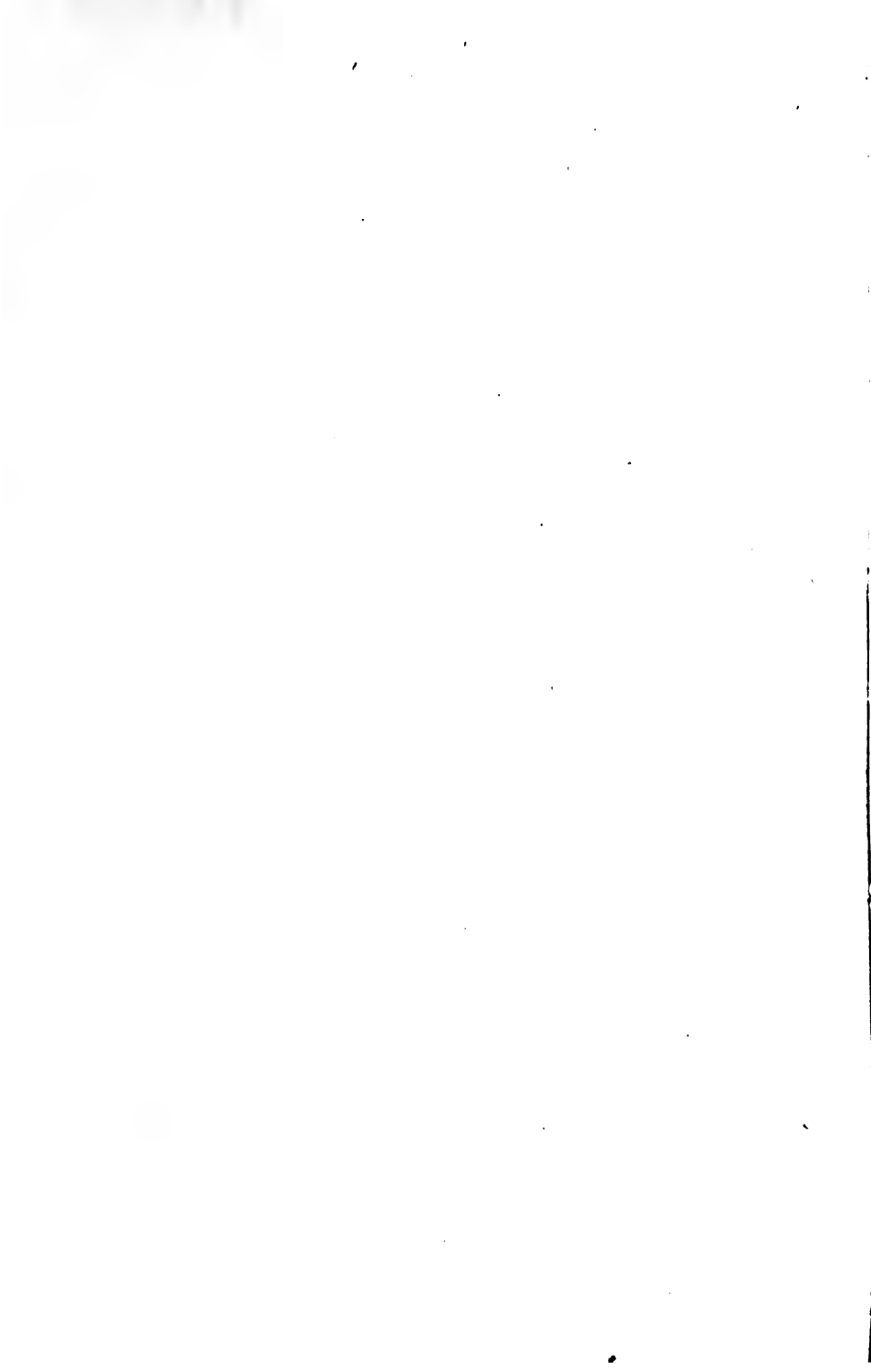
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**DOLORES OF THE SIERRA AND
OTHER ONE ACT PLAYS**



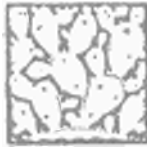
DOLORES OF THE SIERRA

And Other

ONE ACT PLAYS

by

HARRIET HOLMES HASLETT



UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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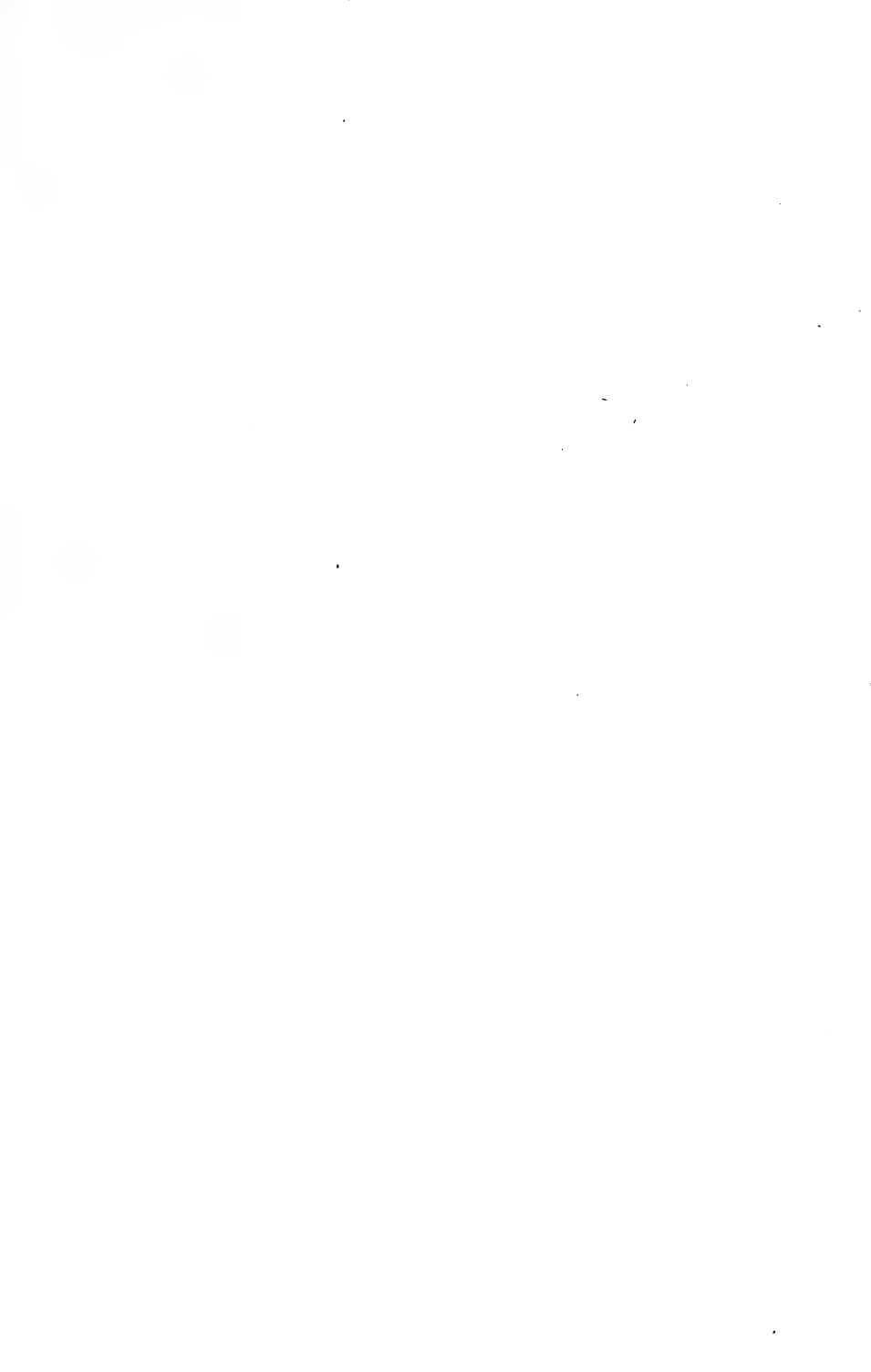
PROLOGUE

I ask of you who read these bits of drama to receive them, not as fiction, but as fragments of the human life about you. Read between the lines, piece out the parts with your own knowledge and emotions, making of the whole a fair-sized square of that patch-work which is called eternity.

Of those who may act them I ask, do all this and something more; for the actor must receive and give. Not only must he live the life of his chosen character, he must so portray it that others will share it with him. Only by recognizing life as it is can he do this.

Thus a triple partnership is formed—author, reader, actor—with life their medium, truth their guide. So equipped they venture forth on the stony path toward success. Ready? The curtain is up!

H. H. H.



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DOLORES *of the* SIERRA *A Mexican* *Episode*

*"How still she was! She only knew his love.
She saw no life beyond"*

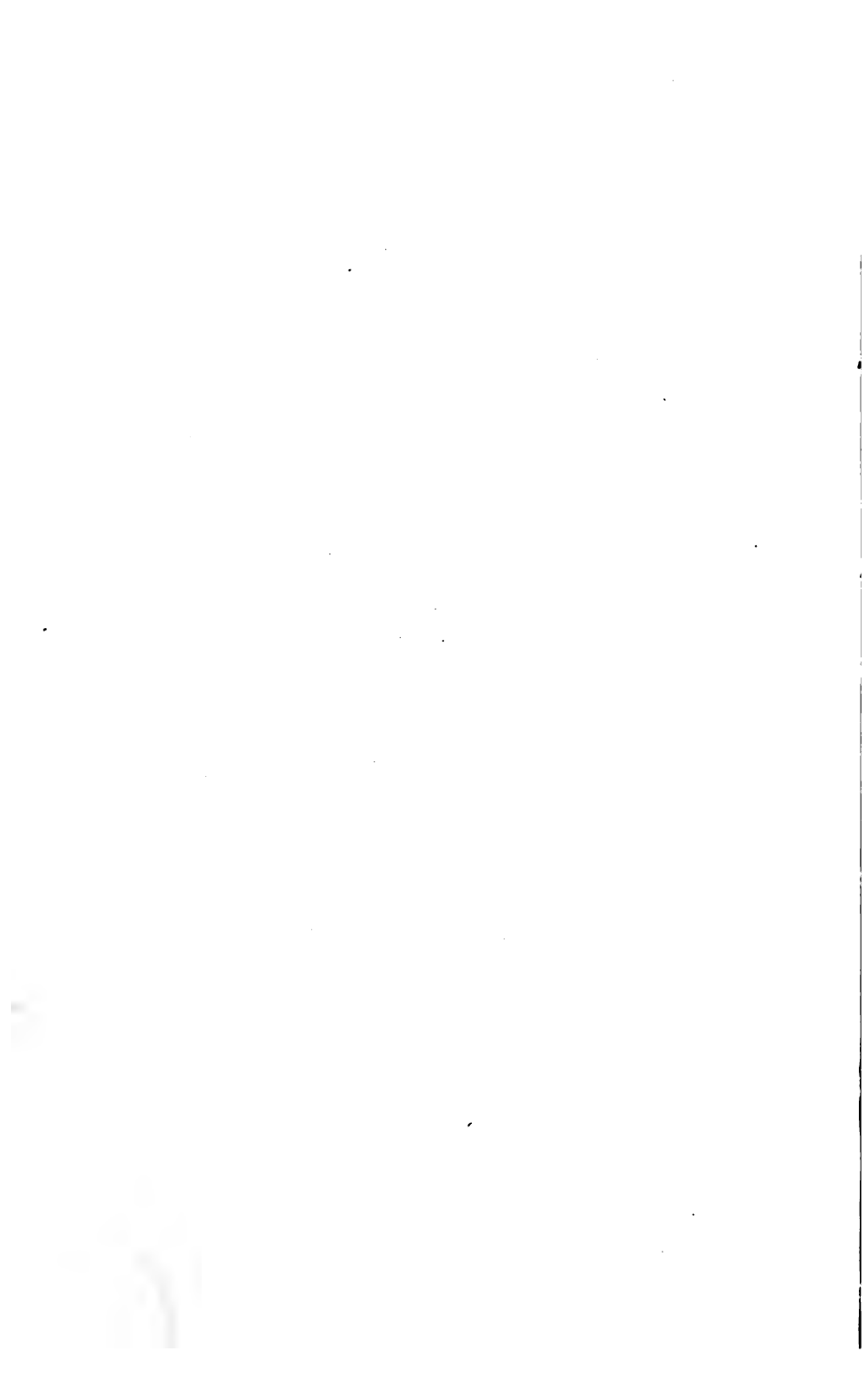
[CHARACTERS]

LEWIS BARCLAY, a railway engineer.

DOLORES, a child of nature.

[SCENE]

A rocky gulch in the mountains of Mexico. Luxuriant undergrowth and fallen logs form the foreground. At right center is a large tree-stump. At left is a fallen log. At back are palms, cypresses and cacti. High up on the left an adobe hut is seen, from which a trail runs down among the rocks, ending at right center. Half way up the trail there is a small shrine.



DOLORES *of the* SIERRA

AT curtain rise LEWIS BARCLAY enters from the right. He is a fine-looking man of thirty-five, alert, well-dressed. He carries a small parcel, a note-book, and a roll of architectural blue-prints. He looks about and up toward the hut. He whistles a sweet bird-call. He walks restlessly to and fro, then sits on the fallen log at left, and examines the blue-prints. There is a faint whistle call in the distance, he answers, then thinking he is mistaken he resumes his study of the prints. There comes a nearer, louder whistle; he springs up with a response, and DOLORES comes quickly down the trail from left. For a moment she stands poised above him, transfixed with joy. Her great dark eyes gleam with pleasure. She wears the simple, gay-colored clothes of a young girl of the people, and her dark hair is drawn loosely back, caught up in a soft knot. BARCLAY bounds up a few steps to meet her, and she throws herself into his arms as a child might. With hands clasped about his neck she looks up at him with delight, then hand in hand, laughing happily, they come down the trail.

DOLORES—[with fond murmurs, caressing his cheeks and hair]
Bonito mio! Bonito mio! You have come back to me, Santo Luis!

BARCLAY—[drawing away] No, no, Dolores! Not that!

DOLORES—Not——? Ah, you *have* come back to me! Madre de Dios, how I have missed you, yes?

BARCLAY—It was a long six weeks, eh, little one?

DOLORES—Six weeks? Six *years* it was, Santo Luis mio!

BARCLAY—Don't call me that, Dolores! If you only knew!

DOLORES—Not call you——how?

BARCLAY—I am no saint, God knows! *Santa Dolores*, if you will, but no saint in mine——if you love me!

DOLORES—[as they sit together on the log at left] But how then may I call you? You are my——*saint*, you say in El Inglés?

DOLORES OF THE SIERRA

BARCLAY—[*seriously*] No, amiguita, Lewis will do. You need give me no title.

DOLORES—But—"Luis"—it is so *short*—such a little, little name, bonito mio, for all my love for you!

BARCLAY—Child, child, what do you know of love, you wild flower of the mountains!

DOLORES—[*nodding wisely*] *I know!* The flowers, they tell me their secrets—the birds, they sing—the trees, the sunshine, the breezes from the sea; all, all the beautiful world tells me of nothing but love, love and you, Santo Luis mio!

BARCLAY—A most unworthy subject! Leave me out, Dolores. See, I have brought you a present. [*He gives her the parcel.*]

DOLORES—[*delightedly*] For me? Ah, muchas gracias, Santo Luis!

BARCLAY—Don't thank me too soon; you may not like it.

DOLORES—[*reproachfully*] Amigo mio! How could that be? [*She opens the parcel, disclosing a gay silk scarf.*] Ah, qué bonita! Qué bonita! [*She tosses it about her head and shoulders.*] Gracias, gracias, Luis!

BARCLAY—You don't need any frippery of that sort. I like you best as you are, my wild bird.

DOLORES—But—[*coaxingly*]—*I* like them! Soon you will bring me more, eh, Luis mio? But no—[*clinging to him*]—that would mean to go away! *Never*, never must you go away again from me!

BARCLAY—That's a big promise, Dolores. Tell me, what have you been doing while I've been away?

DOLORES—[*evasively*] But—what have *you* been doing—the many, many days? You tell me first.

BARCLAY—My affairs wouldn't interest you much. It was principally work.

DOLORES—It was for *rest* you went—bad man!

BARCLAY—I rested too. But, enough of me! What have *you* been doing, that's the point!

DOLORS OF THE SIERRA

DOLORS—But—not much, I think—only—only—

BARCLAY—Only?

DOLORS—I did help Tia Pacheco with tortillas and frijoles for the men, and—

BARCLAY—[*jealously*] I don't like to have you go among the men, dear one!

DOLORS—But—I like to see your work—the great, beautiful bridge you have made. The men—ah, léperos, they are lazy! They do not work well when you are away. They stop *all-the-time*, and look at me!

BARCLAY—[*laughing*] Naturally! Why should they work?

DOLORS—And one man told me—some day from the valley would come, over the bridge, and over the great railroad you have made, a train—like a bad, black snake, to steal me away. But I would not go, Luis mio! [*clinging to him*] I would not go!

BARCLAY—No, no, of course not, ninita!

DOLORS—We will stay always in our mountains, you and me. I *hate* the black snake that tries to take me away from my Sierra Madre!

BARCLAY—It shall not take you away, Dolores—Dolores of the Sierra!

DOLORS—And you will always come back after your—your rest in the world far away?

BARCLAY—[*hesitating*] Always—ninita.

DOLORS—What have you done there? [*imperiously*] Tell me!

BARCLAY—The great black snake from down the valley caught me in his fangs and carried me far away to his home in the east, where men live like bees in a hive—like parts of a machine—and there is nothing but work—work, my wild flower, and no time for God's sunshine!

DOLORS—And no *love*, Santo Luis?

BARCLAY—Precious little—of the real thing.

DOLORS—What is that—"the real thing"—amigo mio?

DOLORES OF THE SIERRA

BARCLAY—You are the real thing, you mountain daisy! Come —what have you been doing? Where are your books? [*with mock sternness*] You have not spent all your time on frijoles and tortillas, have you?

DOLORES—[*goes reluctantly to the tree-stump and draws forth a slate, pencil, and book. She sits demurely, cross-legged, at his feet.*] I have not read much, Padre, since you were gone.

BARCLAY—Padre! [*laughing heartily*] That's a good one! All your saints defend me, Dolores!

DOLORES—[*seriously, motioning toward the shrine and crossing herself*] Laugh not at the saints! They hear you, Luis. The blessed saints, they care for us in all we do!

BARCLAY—They don't waste much time on *me*! Come, give me your book. Where were we? You were getting into words of two syllables when I went away.

DOLORES—[*holding the book behind her*] Amigo mio—the words were *so* long and hard without you!

BARCLAY—But you speak them; why not learn to read and write them, you lazy little thing?

DOLORES—I speak them, yes, because you have taught me; and it is your language I love because it *is* yours. In the days long ago when the good Padre Corvelli taught me El Inglés, I loved it not, though it was my mother's tongue—but it is easy when *you* teach me—S—*Luis* mio!

BARCLAY—[*sighing*] Oh, Dolores! Dolores!

DOLORES—You have come back sad from the great black snake Why is that, Luis?

BARCLAY—Because I—sad? Why should I be sad? [*taking her book*] Come, to work! [DOLORES, *resigned, holds her slate and pencil ready.*] Let me see—"The cat ate the rat"—we had that, hadn't we?

DOLORES—Poof! May he die of it! Yes.

BARCLAY—What a blood-thirsty wish! Why shouldn't the poor cat enjoy his dinner? [*He turns the leaves.*]

DOLORES OF THE SIERRA

DOLORES—As for me—I care not what he ate! Luis mio, why must I write of cats and rats? *Never* do I think of them. Better do I like to think of the beautiful flowers, how they give their honey to the butterflies and bees.

BARCLAY—It seems our grim destiny that we must first learn about the cats and rats. Later we come to the flowers and bees, Dolores. Ah, here we are! “Mary was a good little girl,——” [DOLORES *writes slowly*]*——“she studied her lessons every day, and did many useful things.”*

DOLORES—[*making some erasures*] Cielos! I *hate* that Mary! She was so *good*——always she was so *busy*!

BARCLAY—*She* loved her teacher, you see, and——

DOLORES—Ah, when you speak of love! *She* knew not love. [*snatching the book*] Let me see Mary! You do not know love, you little girl in a book. Poof! [*erasing*] See how I rub you out on my slate! You are all wrong, you *good, busy* Mary!

BARCLAY—[*laughing*] Do you know how to write your own name, Dolores?

DOLORES—No, it is too long. Sometimes I cannot even remember it all!

BARCLAY—How is that?

DOLORES—I have many names. Some were given to me at my baptism——pobrecita! At my first communion I took more——my saints gave some to me. Ah, I have many *beautiful* ones!

BARCLAY—Tell them to me and you shall learn to write them.

DOLORES—That could not be, Padre, I am so stupid. [*She counts on her fingers.*] Maria, Domitilla, Concepcione, Dolores, Lucia, Guadalupe, Carmencita, Matilda, Pacheco, Juanita,——see, I have no more fingers, and yes——*two* more names, but——I have forgotten them!

BARCLAY—Why were you called Dolores? Why not use the others, one each week?

DOLORES—I have many names, yes; but only one means *me*. The

DOLORES OF THE SIERRA

dear mother, when her last sleep was soon to close her eyes, said: "My little Dolores—the saints in dreams have told me—life holds grief for you, and tears." But I think she made a mistake, the mother! The saints are never wrong, but she was too tired to understand—because—

BARCLAY—Because?

DOLORES—Because life holds joy for me, and sunshine. Listen Luis, I will tell you. Long ago when the dear mother was dying—*qué santa gloria haya!* [*crossing herself*] she told me of the great mountain called "Iztaceihautl"—in your tongue you would say, "The White Woman."

BARCLAY—Yes, one sees it from Chapultepec.

DOLORES—Have you seen "The White Woman" lying dead—her snow hair drifting down the slopes? The Indians tell us, once she was a—how you call it—a lady giant?

BARCLAY—A giantess?

DOLORES—A *giantess*, yes! And the other great mountain near, "The Smoking Mountain," he was a giant too. But so proud were they, they would always do *just-as-they-liked!* So one day the great God, he was angry, and said: "You shall be mountains!" Ah, the poor "White Woman," her heart was broken, and she died at once! But ever her lover must live where he can see her lifeless body. Sometimes he shakes the earth with his sobs, and his tears come forth like fire.

BARCLAY—Poor old chap! I forgive him his spouting now. But what have you to do with "The White Woman," *ninita*?

DOLORES—The dear mother, she too was a "white woman." Always she said, she was too proud. She liked her own way too well, and left her people; so the dear God punished her. To me she gave the name Dolores, because—because—she thought I was a child of tears.

BARCLAY—You, my sunbeam, my wild bird?

DOLORES—Always I like to laugh and dance, yes? [*She draws a small revolver from its holster at her side.*] I carry my little friend here—see—to fight the tears away!

DOLORES OF THE SIERRA

BARCLAY—That's a dangerous plaything, Dolores. I am sorry I gave it to you.

DOLORES—It is not for play I wear it. You taught me for a game, yes, but it takes care of me—yet, always must I do my own way. Will the great God punish me, Luis? [*She replaces the revolver.*] Poof! I will not write! [*jumping up and catching his hand*] Let us sing, and dance—and love the sunshine—and our dear Madre mountains—Santo Luis!

BARCLAY—[*drawing her down beside him on the log*] Come, Dolores, I think I can give you something you will like to write. Write this: "I love my beautiful mountains—I love my birds and flowers—I love my teacher, Luis—and bye and bye when the great bridge is finished, and he has gone away—"

DOLORES—[*jumping up, frightened*] When are you going away, Santo Luis?

BARCLAY—[*rising, takes her in his arms*] Dolores, dear one! I can't stay here always in these beautiful mountains. Some day the bridge will be finished, and my men and I will work swiftly down into the Tierras Calientes, and out again into the busy world.

DOLORES—Then I go too, amigo mio!

BARCLAY—What would you do in the busy world, lazy one?

DOLORES—I would be always with you, Luis.

BARCLAY—[*A look of pain comes over his face.*] The world—out there—holds no place for you—with *me*, Dolores. [*He puts her away from him.*]

DOLORES—Why? Who cares where I go? Tia Pacheco would not care. There would not be so many tortillas to make. She would be glad.

BARCLAY—Tia Pacheco will take care of you when I am gone.

DOLORES—But I *will* go with you! I am alone—who will miss me? *You* are alone—together we will go!

BARCLAY—I—I am not alone in the world out there, Dolores. I have—there are people who care for me, and—

DOLORES OF THE SIERRA

DOLORES—Basta! I love not *people*! They are like that busy Mary in the book! [*catching up the book, she throws it violently down*] Do they *love* you, these people?

BARCLAY—[*hesitating*] Yes.

DOLORES—Not as Dolores loves you!

BARCLAY—[*sternly*] No!

DOLORES—Ah, you are cross again! Is it because you do not love Dolores as she loves you, Santo Luis?

BARCLAY—*I love you as you love me?* No——ninita! A man does not love as a woman does!

DOLORES—[*laughing*] But——a *woman*? A beautiful senora with lace mantilla? All down El Paseo they ride to the Fiestas. I have seen them long ago. Oh, no, Luis, Dolores is not a *woman*!

BARCLAY—[*catching her hand*] What then, you witch?

DOLORES—[*dancing away*] A bird——perhaps——a breeze on the hills——a flower!

BARCLAY—[*catching her in his arms*] Yes, yes——you are all those——and yet, a woman! Dolores!——Dolores! [*Suddenly he turns from her, and sinking down on the log, covers his face with his hands.*]

DOLORES—[*runs and kneels beside him*] Santo Luis mio! Look up! What has Dolores done? Tell me, dear one!

BARCLAY—It is nothing, amiguita——it is nothing. I'm tired, I think; that is all. Run away now; I have some work to do. [*His head sinks again.*]

DOLORES—I *know*! You are hungry, amigo mio. When did you eat? At sunrise? Ah, bad one! See how high the sun is now! Quick, quick I must call Tia Pacheco to bring your frijoles [*caressing his hair*] Adios, Santo Luis mio! Soon will I call Tia. [*She goes hurriedly up the trail and out of sight.*]

BARCLAY—[*Remains a moment with bowed head, then slowly rises*

DOLOROS OF THE SIERRA

and looks after her. He walks restlessly about, picks up her slate and book and places them gently on the tree-stump.]

Beast!—Coward!—What shall I do with you, my “breeze of the hillside”—Little Saint of the Sierra!—My God!

[He sits on the log, takes two small photographs, a woman's and a child's from his pocket-book, and gazes at them.]

Yes, you may look at me with your cold eyes, Edith!—When did you ever give me one hundredth part of the love that this child of the hills does? You have let me leave you year after year. What do you care about my work? Would you follow me to these mountains and give me the love that every man craves? No—you stay with the life that amuses you, and I—must live alone! Dolores!—Dolores, child of grief! Am I the dastard who brings you tears? *[looking at the child's picture]* If it were not for you, little chap, I'd cut the life of the east altogether.

[DOLOROS appears at the top of the trail. She wears the full calico skirt and shawl over head of an old woman. She comes down, carrying an earthen pot of frijoles, a tin of coffee and a cup; also some tortillas tied up in a napkin. She steals softly down, peering mischievously at BARCLAY. Half-way the impulse comes to conceal her face. She stops and putting down the things she carries, pins her shawl closely about her head, almost concealing her face.]

BARCLAY—*[hastily rising when he sees her, and absently dropping the photographs as he pockets his case]* Hello, Tia Pacheco! Buenos dias!

DOLOROS—*[mumbling, when she reaches the foot of the trail]* Buenos dias, Senor.

BARCLAY—You didn't waste any time. Did you meet Dolores?

DOLOROS—Si, senor. *[She busies herself spreading the tortillas on the log, and placing the frijoles and the pot of coffee.]*

BARCLAY—Was she happy while I was away, Tia?

DOLOROS—*[mumbling]* Quien sabe? Madre de Dios!

DOLORES OF THE SIERRA

BARCLAY—*[walking restlessly about]* Tia!—Tia! You old woman, what can you understand, I wonder? Do you know that I must go away—away where more bridges are to be built—more railroads? *[DOLORES starts, and mutters.]* You poor old fool, what do you know of such things?—You are to take care of Dolores, do you hear? Teach her to forget me! *[DOLORES shrinks back; she sees the photographs, picks them up and examines them. Then she draws the shawl closer and holds the pictures out to BARCLAY. He, meanwhile, has picked up a tortilla, then puts it down distastefully.]*

DOLORES—Senor! The senora—the muchacho?

BARCLAY—*[laughing wildly]* That's my senora, Tia—my wife; and my muchacho! My boy should be proud of his father, shouldn't he, Tia?

[DOLORES shrinks back against the rocks with a smothered cry. She drops the pictures. Underneath her shawl her hands are busy.]

I've just been to see them, old woman, and I'm going back to them soon. You've got to keep Dolores for me, do you hear? I've been here long enough. When my work is finished I shall go back to my wife and boy.

DOLORES—*[with a smothered cry springs at him. Her up-raised hand holds the revolver. He catches her arm as she pulls the trigger, and she fires into the air. Her shawl falls back revealing her face. The power of his gaze compels her grasp on the weapon to relax and it falls to the ground. She sinks down moaning at his feet.]*

BARCLAY—*[trying to raise her]* Dolores!—Dolores!

DOLORES—Santo Luis!—Santo Luis! Ah, Madre de Dios! The tears have come, and you have brought them, Santo Luis! You steal away my happiness and give me tears. *[He tries again to raise her; she springs up madly at his touch.]* Take away your hands!—Why did you come to my mountains?—Ay, Dios mio! Now I know what means the great black snake! You are the black snake—you—you! *[BARCLAY can say nothing. He stands convicted by the torrent of her*

DOLORES OF THE SIERRA

rage and grief.] You come, creeping up my beautiful Sierra—and bring me tears and sorrow!—Cristo! Cristo! [*She looks about for her revolver, but BARCLAY intercepts her and picks it up. He places it on the tree-stump with her book and slate and stands in front of her.*] Ah, you need not be afraid, you—you coward! I will not kill you now—I think perhaps—perhaps you will suffer more—if you live! You make Dolores suffer, you must suffer too!—Maybe you like to go back to your senora—and remember—remember always—Dolores of the Sierra? That make you happy—yes?

BARCLAY—[*groans and covers his face*] I can never forget you, Dolores—Dolores!

DOLORES—You take away my happiness and keep it yourself. That make you feel good, I think! [*She snatches the photographs from the ground.*] She is your wife!—I hate you—you pale woman! [*Her wild expression changes, and she looks piteously at BARCLAY.*] She does not love you as Dolores does. She knows not love—she is white and cold! She cannot love you as Dolores can! [*She crushes the picture and drops it.*]

BARCLAY—No—that is true. Dolores, you are the one I love. But—my boy—I cannot leave him! He loves me, he believes in me.

DOLORES—[*looking at the boy's picture*] Ah, muchacho mio! He is you—you again, Luis! Luis, Luis, Santo Luis! [*She sinks, sobbing, on the fallen log.*]

BARCLAY—[*kneeling beside her, raises her in his arms*] Listen—dear one! Oh, my God, what can I say to you! [*He holds her in his arms and kisses her. For a moment she yields, then her anger again breaks forth.*]

DOLORES—Keep your kisses for your wife, you—you snake of the mountains! Ay, Dios mio—Dios mio! [*Rising, she staggers across to the tree-stump, and leans against it, looking at the boy's picture.*]

BARCLAY—[*follows her*] I love my boy, Dolores; and when I was at home and looked into his clear eyes, I knew that I must go back to him.

DOLORES—[*still looking at the picture*] Ah, bonito—bonito! Yes,

DOLORES OF THE SIERRA

you must go back, Luis, to this little one. Dolores will wait for you here.—Every year you will come again to the Sierra, yes?

BARCLAY—Yes, amiguita, if it be possible.

DOLORES—Every year—in the spring—when the long snow-hair of the "White Woman" grows shorter, you will come, Luis?

BARCLAY—Every year—in the spring, Dolores!

DOLORES—See then—happiness will come back to me! I will be busy, and laugh—and sing again. [*She gives him the boy's picture.*] Go back to your beautiful little one, Luis. Take happiness to him. [*She goes toward the tree-stump, BARCLAY follows her apprehensively.*] Ah, do not fear, I am calm now. See, I smile again! [*BARCLAY picks up the revolver.*] Give it to me. Once more it will keep the tears from me. [*He gives her the revolver and she replaces it in its holster.*] You go not away soon—no? You have still many days to work before the great bridge is finished?

BARCLAY—Some weeks yet I think.

DOLORES—Bueno! You can still be with me then for many days—and I will be calm—so calm and still, Luis!

BARCLAY—That's my good Dolores! Ninita mia! [*He tries to take her in his arms, but she repulses him.*]

DOLORES—No—no more kisses, amigo mio! I must go, Luis—Tia will need me. Pobre Tia—she is so old!

BARCLAY—Till tomorrow then—ninita!

DOLORES—Till tomorrow, Luis—and all the tomorrows! [*She catches his hand and kisses it, then runs lightly up the trail. He stands at the foot, watching her. When she reaches the shrine she drops for a moment on her knees before it; then, rising, turns and faces him.*]

Till tomorrow—and forever—Luis! The "White Woman" is calling me—Santo Luis! Santo Luis! [*Drawing her revolver she turns it on her breast, and pulls the trigger.—As he reaches her she falls into his arms, but the form he holds is lifeless. The "White Woman" has called home her "child of tears."*]

THE SCOOP • *A Dramatic Sketch*

[CHARACTERS]

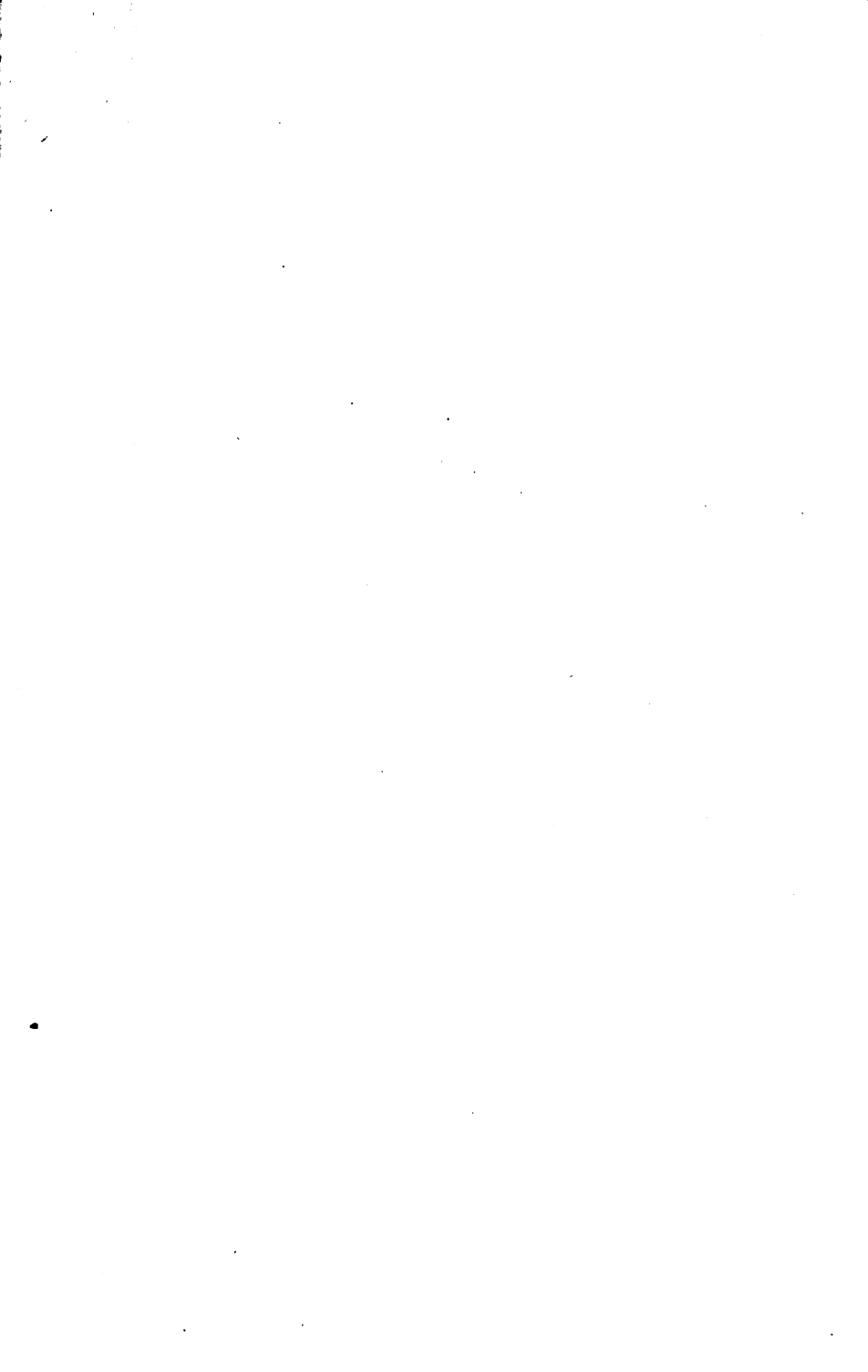
WHITNEY RAYMOND, cashier for Coleman Brothers.

EDITH, his daughter.

RUSSELL WHEELER, reporter on "The Herald."

[SCENE]

The Raymonds' living-room. It is comfortably furnished. There is a center entrance leading into the hall. Through the open portières a portable telephone on a small stand is seen, also a hat-rack or hall chair. There is a window, upper left, with a tabouret and chair near. At right a door leads into a bedroom. There is a reading table with books, magazines, papers, and flowers down right center. An easy chair and a straight chair are left and right of the table. A small couch with cushions is down left. A small chair is up left center, and a mantel and clock are at upper right.



THE SCOOP • *A Dramatic Sketch*

*A*T curtain EDITH sits sewing near the window. One does not see her at first. The high back of her chair conceals her, but her voice is heard humming a love song. Dropping her work she gazes out the window, then rises, still humming.

A postman's whistle is heard and a letter is dropped into the hall. EDITH goes through the portières, and returns with the letter.

She saunters about, smiling and catching her breath as she silently reads. Once she shakes her head. With the letter in her hand she tip-toes to the bedroom door, opens it softly and listens a moment.

EDITH—Did you call me, mother? [*glancing at the clock*] Yes, mother dear, it is time for your medicine. I'll bring it to you. The new bottle is here. Did the postman's whistle waken you? Too bad! [*in response to a question from within*] No letters for you. Hm?—Oh, this one is from Mr. Wheeler! [*getting the medicine bottle from the table*] He wants to come to see me this afternoon. I don't know what I am going to do with him. Why, I've only known him two weeks! [*She goes into the bedroom.*]

[*The telephone rings twice with an interval between. EDITH hastens from the bedroom and answers.*]

Hello!—Yes?—1259, yes!—Oh, yes, Mr. Wheeler!—I'm always well, thank you.—Why, I've just received it.—Yes, the postman was awfully late today.—Well, I—yes—I'll be at home this afternoon; be glad to see you!—Hm?—*Which* discussion do you wish to continue?—Both?—Oh, no, no! Not yet! How could I decide so soon?—Yes, you may come right away, if you like.—She's feeling a little better today, thanks.—No, I don't think you'll disturb her.—All right, see you in a little while!—[*laughing*] No, I tell you, I haven't! I haven't!—No! NO! Good-byl [*She hangs up and goes to the bedroom door.*] Mr. Wheeler is coming to see me this afternoon, mother. You don't mind, do

THE SCOOP

you? Would you like to sleep again? I'll pull down the shades. [*She goes into the bedroom.*]

[WHITNEY RAYMOND *enters from the hall.*]

[*He is an elderly man, nervous and care-worn. His clothes are shabby. He leaves his overcoat and hat on the hall-stand, puts the newspaper which he carries on the reading table. With a gesture of weariness he goes to the couch and sits.*]

[EDITH *enters. She closes the bedroom door softly.*]

EDITH—Daddy! Why are you home so early? [RAYMOND *looks helplessly at her and holds his head in his hands.*] What is it, dear? Headache?

RAYMOND—[*vaguely*] I don't know, Edie. Headache—heartache—everything!

EDITH—[*caressing his head*] Poor old dad! Lie down awhile. What shall I give you? A nice cool drink?

RAYMOND—[*leaning against her*] Little cool fingers! I think it is rest I want more than anything else.

EDITH—Then rest here, dad. [*He lies down and she makes him comfortable.*]

RAYMOND—[*with closed eyes*] How is mother this afternoon?

EDITH—I really think she's better today. She is quite comfortable now.

RAYMOND—That's good news.

EDITH—She has just taken a dose of her new medicine. That always gives her hope, you know.

RAYMOND—And how is my little "stand-by," housekeeper, head-nurse?

EDITH—Never better! [*brightly*] Dad! I've got a splendid plan. I was just inventing it as I sat sewing by the window. Everything is so green and lovely here now; think what the mountains must be like!

RAYMOND—[*opens his eyes and smiles faintly*] Think of brush-

THE SCOOP

ing your way through a bed of cool green brakes and hearing the stream down below calling to you!

EDITH—[*briskly*] That's just it!

RAYMOND—Eh?

EDITH—My plan. You're to ask Coleman Brothers for an extra vacation this year. [RAYMOND *protests*.] What's two weeks when a man has given them the long years of faithful service that you have?

RAYMOND—[*sitting up*] Oh, no, no! I couldn't do that.

EDITH—Well, if you don't, I will! [*She walks to the right, imitating.*] I'll go straight down town tomorrow morning and march into Mr. Coleman's office and say: "Good-morning, Mr. Coleman;" (of course I'll remember to be polite!) "my father's not well; he needs a whole month in the mountains this year. When can he go?" And the *benevolent* Mr. Coleman will say: [*sarcastically, stroking an imaginary beard*] "Why certainly, Miss Raymond, he may take July; and here's his salary, doubled in advance, for expenses!" [*laughing*]

RAYMOND—[*breaking down and covering his face*] My God, child, don't!

EDITH—[*kneeling beside him*] Daddy! Daddy! What have I done?

RAYMOND—[*with a sudden resolve*] You have been a staunch little pal all through, Edith. Through the pain of sister Nell's death—then the baby's. Now your mother's illness! You have to bear the brunt of all that.

EDITH—But what could I have done without you?

RAYMOND—Ah, that's the hard part! What will become of you when you have to do without me? Can your tired little shoulders bear another burden?

EDITH—I'm not a bit tired; I'm quite well. But what do you mean, dad?

RAYMOND—You've got to know, dear. I'd rather you'd hear it from me first. Your brave heart will help me to face it, and keep it from mother if we can.

THE SCOOP

EDITH—Dad! What is it?

RAYMOND—[*drawing her closer to him*] You remember the Cuban Sugar Company I bought into that time, and the failure afterward? [EDITH *nods.*] Well, that took about all I had.

EDITH—I never knew how much went; you didn't tell me.

RAYMOND—Why should I have bothered your poor little head with my mistakes? There was the bank failure before that, and I depended upon the Cuban investment to pull me up again.

EDITH—And you had nothing left?

RAYMOND—Nothing, except my health and my salary. I didn't let your mother know the extent of our losses. She had enough to bear at that time, poor little mother!

EDITH—Yes——that's right.

RAYMOND—[*hesitating*] It began——with Nell's funeral expenses.

EDITH—Father! What?——Oh, no! [*She shrinks back.*]

RAYMOND—Yes——it was that! I couldn't put my pride in my pocket and ask a friend for money. I used Firm funds. There they were, going through my hands every day. [EDITH *listens with intensity.*] Then, once done, it was easier to do it again. Hospital expenses for your mother, her last year's trip to the mountains——

EDITH—And mine?

RAYMOND—Yes, and yours. Then——Baby Jean's operation——yet, it didn't save her. A poor man's child can't afford appendicitis! You see, no one knew how poor I was.

EDITH—I always wondered how you did it!

RAYMOND—I suppose others wondered too; but I don't think anyone suspects.

EDITH—[*springing up*] Suspects! You, daddy?

RAYMOND—It is an ugly word, Edie. It comes before disgrace.

EDITH—[*excitedly*] There's no disgrace! You did it for love; yes, you did! [*Thinking of her mother, she takes a step or two toward the bedroom door.*]

THE SCOOP

RAYMOND—But disgrace will come. [*rising*] I feel it now in this weight oppressing me. I cannot stand it any longer. I must confess it to my employers!

EDITH—Then disgrace will come only in what *other* people think!

RAYMOND—[*walking up and down*] I must take my chances. The world is always ready with its judgment, good or bad.

EDITH—The world! The world doesn't know what it thinks! A few newspapers and magazines tell it what it thinks; that's all!

RAYMOND—That is the "Power of the Press."

EDITH—[*indignantly*] And they don't use it right!

RAYMOND—[*going to her*] Is this my little optimist speaking?

EDITH—[*ruefully*] An optimist out of a job for a few minutes.

RAYMOND—I need all your bravery to help me. I shall tell Mr. Coleman tomorrow morning. I came home early today to rest, and to tell you if I had the courage. [*He sits again on the couch.*] I had it out with myself last night. We'll not speak of it yet to your mother. The Firm may be lenient and give me another chance, so we'll spare your mother needless anxiety, eh, dear?

EDITH—[*kneeling beside him*] Oh, dad! Must you tell them?

RAYMOND—[*turning her face toward him*] Look at me straight, Edith!

EDITH—[*looking at him a moment, her gaze falters*] Yes—you must!

RAYMOND—I'll go to the junior partner, Henry; he is not so hard as the senior. [*thinking he hears a call from the bedroom*] Is that your mother calling? I'll go to her and rest on the couch in her room. [*He takes EDITH in his arms.*] My brave little partner!

EDITH—Oh, it's you, daddy! It's you that's brave. [*The door-bell rings.*]

RAYMOND—[*nervously*] Who's that?

EDITH—It is probably Mr. Wheeler. You know I told you

THE SCOOP

about him. He's on "The Herald." He just phoned that he was coming out for awhile. Oh, dear! I wish I'd told him not to come!

RAYMOND—*[hastening into the bedroom]* I must go.

[EDITH *hurriedly picks up her sewing and stands near the window.*]

[RUSSELL WHEELER *enters briskly from the hall. He puts his hat and gloves on the hall-stand.*]

WHEELER—Hello, little girl!

EDITH—*[going forward and shaking hands]* How d'ye do, Mr. Wheeler?

WHEELER—Bully! How are you? *[surveying her]* What's the matter?

EDITH—Why—why—what do you mean? I'm all right; *really* I am!

WHEELER—No you're not! *[ironically]* You look as if you had "lost your job."

EDITH—*[laughing uncertainly]* Nonsense!

RAYMOND—That's no joke. Is your mother worse? This sick-nurse business is too much for you.

EDITH—I'm not tired; honestly I'm not. Father came home early today; he is with mother now. *[She sits on the couch, and motions for him to take a chair. He sits at left of the table.]*

WHEELER—I'd like to meet your father. You know I have never even seen him.

EDITH—He's rather tired today. He's—not feeling well. He came home to rest. *[She gets her sewing from the tabouret.]*

WHEELER—So you have two sick people to take care of!

EDITH—He's not really sick; he's tired from overwork; but he expects a good long vacation soon. *[She sews.]*

WHEELER—That's the dope! I don't see why employers don't think of that oftener. Most of them treat their men like machines.

THE SCOOP

EDITH—[*sadly*] Yes, but the poor machines have cares, and overstrained nerves, and—oh, everything—

WHEELER—[*sympathetically*] Yes?—And—?

EDITH—[*recovering herself with a start*] Well—er—let's continue our discussion.

WHEELER—Discussion? What discussion?

EDITH—Why, newspaper work, you know. The ethics of getting a "scoop."

WHEELER—Um-hum! But I was thinking of something else. Of *you*! Can't you give me a little bit of hope, Edith?

EDITH—Only—that—I *like* you very much.

WHEELER—That's something!

EDITH—That is all I can say now.

WHEELER—Well, I am going to hope on that.

EDITH—Why, we only met two weeks ago!

WHEELER—Yes, but you said yourself that you felt as though we had known each other before.

EDITH—Yes, I know.

WHEELER—[*impetuously, sitting on the couch beside her and taking her hand*] And I felt so, too! Why, even last week I *knew* you were—mine!

EDITH—[*rising quickly, goes to the table*] Did you? How interesting! [*teasing*] Do you always make "copy" in a mad rush like this? Am I a "scoop"?

WHEELER—No! If *you* were a "scoop," I'd have played you up with a seven-column head, and run you that night!

EDITH—[*tantalizingly, sits left of the table*] Gracious, how nice! You mean a big, scary headline?

WHEELER—You don't believe me, do you?

EDITH—No. It takes two to make a "scoop" of that kind.

WHEELER—Yes, it does, worse luck!—When do you think you will know, Edith?

THE SCOOP

EDITH—Know what?

WHEELER—If you will marry me?

EDITH—Honestly, Mr. Wheeler, I haven't the least idea. We must become better acquainted. [*sadly*] It may be a long time, and you may have changed your mind by then.

WHEELER—Never!—Don't you think it might make you feel better acquainted if you called me Russell?

EDITH—Perhaps! [*teasing*] I'll practice it to myself first!

WHEELER—[*rising*] Good! We're progressing. You may get that "write-up" sooner than you think. [*He goes to the table, picks up a newspaper, demonstrating. EDITH rises and looks over the paper with him.*] Headline: "The Latest Engagement," in regular color-scheme, dainty-refreshment-style, photo, et cetera! Much better than "Broken Hearts," written in "sob stuff."

EDITH—[*teasing*] How romantic! Oh, I should *love* that!

WHEELER—That's what takes with the "Dear Public." I always like to give it what it wants.

EDITH—[*returning to the couch*] How are you getting on with your work? Do you like it better here than in your own "home town"?

WHEELER—[*sitting on the edge of the table*] So, so! Humans are doing about the same things everywhere. You run against the same kind of "copy" in every town. Auto smash-ups, defaulting cashiers, [*EDITH winces*] college-student-elopements, and all the rest of it. The main thing is to get a "scoop." That's what counts.

EDITH—And nothing else?

WHEELER—No, gee whiz! Why should it? If I can get a line on a story ahead of the next fellow, it's mine!

EDITH—A "line"? You mean only a rumor? Don't you wait to confirm it? [*She sews.*]

WHEELER—[*moves to the chair left of the table*] My dear girl, while I am waiting, John Smith is scooping it.

THE SCOOP

EDITH—Oh, it shouldn't be like that!

WHEELER—No, it shouldn't, but *it is*.

EDITH—And would nothing stand in your way of using it?

WHEELER—Nothing! Besides we can always contradict it next day in a couple of "sticks."

EDITH—[*indignantly*] Yes! In a tiny paragraph in small type on an inside page!

WHEELER—Um-hum!

EDITH—Meantime untold suffering may have been caused by the false news.

WHEELER—"All's fair," you know, "in love and——"

EDITH—Maxims! Fables! I won't be ruled by them! Besides, you're misquoting. But newspaper work *is* war, isn't it? And "war is——[*demurely*] hell!"

WHEELER—[*surprised*] Eh?

EDITH—Yes, I know the meaning of the word. It's a good one, not used half enough!

WHEELER—[*emphatically, bringing a small chair from upper left and sitting at her right*] Look here! I have a great mind to give you an illustration—a tip a fellow gave me last night, and I feel like telling *you*!

EDITH—Do you?

WHEELER—Yes, I can trust you. You're the first woman to whom I ever felt like telling a secret.

EDITH—[*teasing*] Thank you!

WHEELER—Honest! I want to tell you this to show you how we newspaper men must work to hold our end up and get ahead of the other fellow.

EDITH—To convince me, in other words, how *fair* you are!

WHEELER—As you like. However, I'll not burden you with the secret if you don't wish it.

EDITH—You may. I'll keep it. When is it coming out?

THE SCOOP

WHEELER—It'll "break" tomorrow morning.

EDITH—Oh, then! I shall be able to contain myself for that short time.

WHEELER—It's a defaulting case. The man doesn't even know he is suspected. [EDITH *straightens and grows tense.*] Great sensation for "The Public," eh? [*rising*] A welcome addition to its mush and coffee! It will be the neatest thing I've ever done.

EDITH—But the man himself! He will read it too.

WHEELER—Of course, I can't help that.

EDITH—[*breathlessly*] Who—who—is he?

WHEELER—Joke of it is, I've never seen the man; don't know his name. He's cashier for Coleman Brothers.

EDITH [*mechanically*] Coleman Brothers! [*Her work slips from her hands to the floor.*]

WHEELER—[*returns her work to her without seeing her face; sits*] Yes, wholesale furniture, you know. A friend of mine in there got a clue of what he thought might be a good story for me, and followed it up. He overheard an argument between the partners. The senior's a hard old fellow, but the junior was inclined to give the man a chance to explain—years of faithful service, and all that, but the senior prevailed.

EDITH—[*evenly*] What made them suspect him?

WHEELER—Several discrepancies in customers' accounts. The man has evidently been growing careless. The books are to be experted this afternoon without his being told in advance. [*rising*] It's a sure thing they'll find a deficit. So there's my "scoop"! Hurrah! I'm looking for promotion next day.—[*sitting beside EDITH, and taking her hand*]—Now, may I hope just a little, Edith?

EDITH—[*drawing away her hand, trying to sew*] Why don't you know the man's name?

WHEELER—[*beginning to notice her strained, mechanical manner*] My friend gave me the story very hurriedly last night in a

THE SCOOP

street-car. We couldn't discuss names; he whispered it. It sounded like——er——Reynolds, or something like that. I have an appointment with him after I leave here; I'll get it then.

EDITH—[*recovering herself*] Why doesn't the man know? How can he help knowing if his books are to be experted?

WHEELER—He is off duty this afternoon.

EDITH—[*rising, with an impulse to get away*] Oh, it isn't fair to him!

WHEELER—Why play fair with him? He hasn't played fair with them, the old scamp!

EDITH—[*sitting again on the couch*] He may not be wicked at all. I know—I *knew* a case where the man was pressed through circumstances, through weakness—there were reasons.

WHEELER—Those are not reasons, they are only excuses.

EDITH—Oh, have you no heart?

WHEELER—Yes, for *you*!

EDITH—[*turning away*] I'm not joking.

WHEELER—No, I don't believe you are. [*laying his hand on hers*] Don't take it so seriously, girl. You mustn't try to right all this world's wrongs at once, you know.

EDITH—[*trying to speak lightly*] I'm not. Then you admit it *is* a wrong?

WHEELER—What?

EDITH—Your "scoop."

WHEELER—[*rising*] Nix! That's business. I've got to fight my own battles in the world; the old cashier's got to fight his.

EDITH—But you are taking him at a disadvantage.

WHEELER—And *he* took them at a disadvantage, and so it goes!

EDITH—But you don't know what stress may have prompted him to this, while *you* are only working for self-advancement.

WHEELER—And *you*!

THE SCOOP

EDITH—[*rising*] No, not me! Count me out of your plans, please!

WHEELER—I can't, Edith. You're in them to stay.

EDITH—You've offered me your heart, but I have found you haven't any to offer.

WHEELER—Edith!

EDITH—You will not even admit that there might be circumstances through which this poor man was pressed to crime.

WHEELER—That's not my business.

EDITH—It is mine, though, to find out what sort of a heart is being offered me.

WHEELER—A nice soft old world this would be if we allowed our sympathies to run away with all our business!

EDITH—It would be a much better and a happier one.

WHEELER—I'm sorry I mentioned this, dear.

EDITH—I'm not!

WHEELER—You're not the same girl you were when I entered this room.

EDITH—No, I've learned much since then.

WHEELER—What, for instance?

EDITH—That "fair play" is only a pretty term that looks well in print!

WHEELER—On the contrary, it's often used.

EDITH—Yes, after a certain question has been asked.

WHEELER—What question?

EDITH—"What is there in it for me?"

WHEELER—That's what we've *got* to ask ourselves. Let the other fellow look out for himself.

EDITH—Yes, you said something like that before. You and I are only traveling around in a circle, Mr. Wheeler.

WHEELER—Is there nothing I can do or say to make you see this matter in a different light?

THE SCOOP

EDITH—I'm afraid not. I am more firmly convinced than ever that heads *and hearts* should work together in all the affairs of life.—And now I must ask you to excuse me, Mr. Wheeler. My mother may need me. [*She goes toward the bedroom door.*]

WHEELER—Of course! I know you are busy and tired. Edith! If you will not give me any hope, will you at least try to take care of yourself—for *my* sake, as well as the others'?

EDITH—I'll try to take care of myself for those who need me. I don't think you are one of them.

WHEELER—I am, Edith; more than you know—more than *I* know, perhaps!

[WHITNEY RAYMOND *enters from the bedroom. He is wearing a smoking jacket.*]

EDITH—[*going to him, protectingly*] This is Mr. Wheeler. My father, Mr. Wheeler.

RAYMOND—[*offers his hand*] How d'ye do, Mr. Wheeler?

WHEELER—[*shaking hands*] How d'ye do, sir? Glad to meet you!

RAYMOND—Edith, your mother wants you. Excuse her for a few minutes, Mr. Wheeler.

WHEELER—I am just going.

RAYMOND—Oh, don't be in a hurry! Sit down—[*vaguely*]—sit down. [EDITH *nods and goes into the bedroom.* RAYMOND *sits wearily in the easy chair at left of the table, leaving WHEELER to seat himself.*] That's the best girl in the world, Mr. Wheeler.

WHEELER—[*rather surprised at RAYMOND's manner, sits at right of table*] I don't doubt it.

RAYMOND—Yes, she's everything—everything we have left.

WHEELER—I admire Miss Raymond more than I can say. In fact I—[*He pauses and watches RAYMOND who has sunk back in his chair in a dull, dejected attitude.*] Mr. Raymond! You are ill!

RAYMOND—No—no, not ill. I'm a bit tired, that's all.

WHEELER—Too closely confined in business, I presume?

THE SCOOP

RAYMOND—Yes, and my wife is very ill. I don't believe Edith knows how serious it is. I have been trying to get away for some time but it has been impossible.

WHEELER—Still, it's a man's duty to himself. You're occupied in office work, I suppose?

RAYMOND—[*dully*] I am cashier for Coleman Brothers. [WHEELER *sits as though petrified.*] I have been there twenty-five years.

WHEELER—[*rises, stands at the table, fingering the books nervously*] Coleman Brothers! [*half audibly*] Twenty-five years!

RAYMOND—Yes. A long time, eh? None too many holidays, either. Steady at it all the time.

WHEELER—[*mechanically, making conversation*] We——er—— don't have enough regular vacations, and we're never even certain of the holidays.

RAYMOND—My vacations have been spent at home the last few years. We have had a run of bad luck in this household, Mr. Wheeler. But there, I'm bothering you, a stranger, with our misfortunes.

WHEELER—Believe me, I am interested; intensely interested, Mr. Raymond.

RAYMOND—My wife broke down about six months ago after almost a year of anxiety over a daughter's illness. She was just eighteen, Mr. Wheeler; growing up to be a companion for Edith. But we lost her——we lost her.

WHEELER—[*incoherently*] That was hard.

RAYMOND—[*talking as though to himself*] During Nell's illness our baby Jean was taken from us. My God! I gave my last cent to try and keep her here, but it was no use. And—— but I wonder why I am telling you all this!——That little girl in there is fighting for the truth all the time, and just now the fight is a tough one. She's watching her mother die by inches, yet she never falters. And this is not the end! [*His head sinks.*]

WHEELER—Not the end? Surely you have had enough!

THE SCOOP

RAYMOND—[*trying to rally*] That's enough of our affairs. I've bored you too long. You're a stranger here, Edith tells me.

WHEELER—Yes, a stranger, yet—[*with determination*] Mr. Raymond, I want to do something for you—help you in some way. What can I do?

RAYMOND—[*evasively*] A friend is a good thing. I may need a friend—tomorrow. Will you be one?

WHEELER—[*offering his hand*] I'm your friend now, and tomorrow, too!

RAYMOND [*rising, holding his hand*] Thank you. I like you, young man. What you do, you do *quickly*, with a will. I can see that.

WHEELER—I make infernal mistakes sometimes.

RAYMOND—[*turning away*] We all do.

WHEELER—[*a sudden thought striking him*] May I use your phone?

RAYMOND—Certainly. Right out there. Excuse me, will you? I'll go to Mrs. Raymond, and send Edith.

WHEELER—[*looking up a number in the telephone directory*] Please do. I'd like to speak to her before I go if possible.

RAYMOND—I'll send her. [*He goes into the bedroom.*]

WHEELER—[*at the telephone*] Hello! Give me Sutter 3459—NO, 3459—yes. Hello! Coleman Brothers! Is Benton in? *Tom Benton.*—Get him, please.—Hello, Tom! This is Russ. I say, Tom, that story we talked about last night; it's *all off.*—I don't care *what* they think, it's all off, I tell you.—Scare-heads, nothing! Drop it, I tell you!—And look here, Tom, you tip that junior partner to come out here and have a talk with—well, with the man discussed. He'll find something out to his advantage.—Sure thing! I'm in his house now, right on the job.—No matter *how*—I know. Tell him to come pretty damn quick!—No, sir—*use it?* Not for a million dollars! If the junior can't see him tell him to see me!—Good-by! [*He hangs up the receiver.*]

THE SCOOP

[EDITH enters from the bedroom. WHEELER goes quickly to her, offering his hand.]

WHEELER—I only wanted to say good-by, Miss Edith.

EDITH—[without taking his hand] Good-by.

WHEELER—[nervously] I hope your mother will soon be better. And—er—Edith, I've changed my mind about that story. I've decided not to use it. In fact I don't think anyone will get it.

EDITH—[her face lighting up, goes to him with clasped hands] Not use it? Oh! Why—what has changed you?

WHEELER—[clasping her hands in his] Many things. You most of all! Good-by! [He goes out hurriedly.]

EDITH—[There is a pause as she looks after him.]—Good-by! —Russell!

[WHITNEY RAYMOND enters from the bedroom. EDITH runs to him, takes his hands and draws him toward his easy chair.]

EDITH—Daddy! Daddy! He's not going to—oh, I forgot! You don't know!

RAYMOND—[vaguely, sits at left of table] What, dear?

[The telephone rings, EDITH answers.]

EDITH—Hello!—Yes?—Oh, yes, Mr. Coleman!—He's awfully tired, but I'm sure he'd like to see you. [excitedly] Oh, do come!—Yes! Yes! Good-by. [She hangs up and runs excitedly to her father, kneeling before him.] Daddy! Daddy! It's all coming right, I'm sure it is! Mr. Henry Coleman wants to see you, he's coming to see you now. Tell him today, dad, tell him today!

RAYMOND—Coming here?

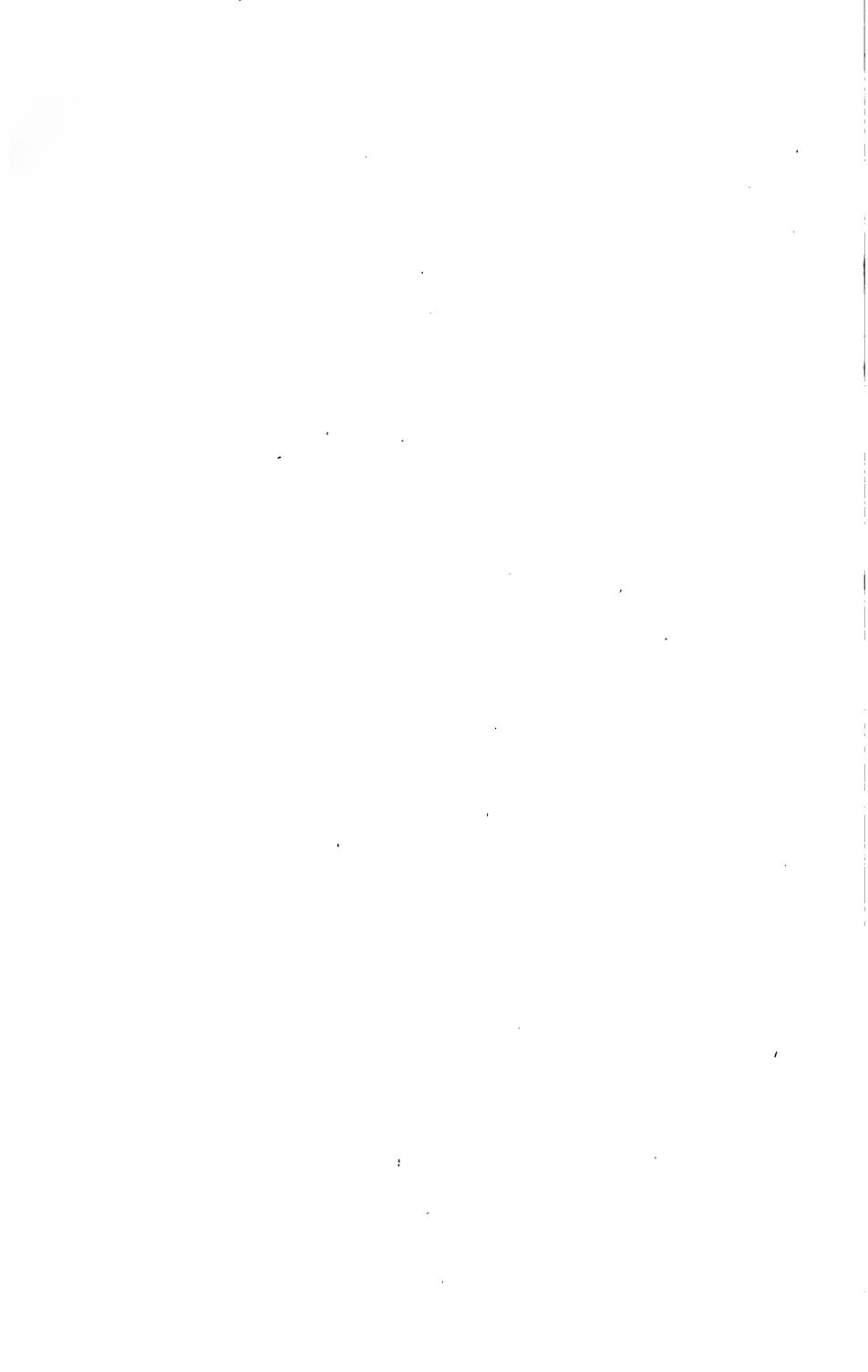
EDITH—Yes, in a few minutes.—How did he know? What changed him?—I wonder—! [springing up] Dad! What did you and Mr. Wheeler talk about?

RAYMOND—[vaguely] I hardly know, dear; my head aches so today! I must have rambled on a bit; and yes, I remember

THE SCOOP

his saying that he'd like to do something for me, and——er—— he went to the telephone. But——I must get ready to receive Mr. Coleman. [*He goes hurriedly into the bedroom.*]

EDITH—[*with intense joy*] It's going to be all right; I know! I know! [*She picks up WHEELER's letter from the table where she has thrown it, kissing it.*] He has a heart after all! Oh, I'm so happy!——So happy!



UNDERCURRENTS • *A Melodrama*

[CHARACTERS]

THE MAN.

THE WOMAN.

A WAITER.

THE OTHER MAN.

A COUPLE.

[SCENE]

The entrance hall of an underground café of the better sort. At center a short stairway leads down from the street entrance. At right double glass doors lead into the main café. At left are two private boxes numbered one and two, with curtains half drawn, each containing a table set for two persons. Box one, which is nearest the audience, has an open side showing the interior. An orchestra is playing in the main café.



UNDERCURRENTS • *A Melodrama*

A T curtain THE MAN is discovered leaning against the railing near the top of the stairway. An old cap is pulled down over his eyes.

[A WAITER enters from the main café, looks suspiciously at THE MAN, then goes into Box two. THE MAN looks furtively about, draws a revolver from his hip pocket, looks it over, then places it in his right coat pocket.]

[A COUPLE enter at C, and brush against THE MAN. THE WOMAN lifts her skirts disdainfully aside, THE MAN pushes him rudely.]

[THE WAITER enters from Box two at the same moment. THE COUPLE descend the stairway and go into the main café, THE WAITER opening the doors for them.]

WAITER—[surveying THE MAN on the stairway] Here, you! Get to hell out of this! You're blocking that entrance. This ain't no reception room. Beat it!

THE MAN—[straightens up and pushes back his cap] Damn your impudence!

WAITER—Oh! I—er—table, sir?

THE MAN—Say, you damn fool, just salt yourself a bit—you're fresh! Yes—[looking about vaguely]—reserve a table for me.

WAITER—Very well, sir. [He goes into Box one, tips the chairs against the table, then exits into the main café.]

[Enter THE OTHER MAN C. He brushes against THE MAN.]

THE OTHER MAN—Hello! I beg your pardon! Look here, what are you blocking up this entrance for? You nearly knocked me downstairs.

THE MAN—Damn it—I've got as much right to this entrance as you have! The sooner you reach hell the better! Do you think you're the only—[pushing back his cap].

OTHER MAN—Why—Bob?

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THE MAN—Hello—Kent! I didn't know you ever came here to eat.

OTHER MAN—Same here. I'm sort of off my beaten track lately. This is good enough for a change. Come in and eat with me.

THE MAN—Much obliged, not tonight. I'm going to have a sandwich—and then take myself out of this hell—or into another! Take your choice!

OTHER MAN—[*good-naturedly*] You're not in an obliging mood tonight, are you? Come along, get over your peeve!—[*He draws him down the stairs.*]

THE MAN—Oh, what's the use? What's it all worth, Kent? A man works—and grinds—and spends. [*He draws Kent toward the glass doors of the café.*] Look at them all in there. What's it worth to them, all that gorging and drinking? And what are you worth to a girl except the number of theater tickets, jewelry and suppers you can pony up? You play a cutthroat game with Life and Chance—and you get euchred, that's all! How many of those in there will come out ahead, I wonder!

OTHER MAN—Cut it out, my son, cut it out! [*with mock virtue*] Behold your pattern in me!

THE MAN—Oh, I know you don't go in much for that sort of thing! It's a game you don't play; but it's all very well for you to preach—you're on Easy street.

OTHER MAN—Who's preaching?

THE MAN—Well, it's easy enough for you to keep even with the world when your father is your employer too. But he isn't my father—he's just my employer. Say, Kent—I—I'm thinking of resigning from the company, and striking out for a new place. I didn't mean to tell you now, but you came on me so suddenly. Say a good word for me at the meeting tomorrow, will you?

OTHER MAN—Sure thing! But, look here, you must reconsider that, Bob. The old man will give you a raise—you're worth a lot more to him than I am.

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THE MAN—*[turning away]* No, my mind is made up.

OTHER MAN—*[taking hold of his arm]* What are your reasons? You and I have been good friends, Bob. Can't you tell me?

THE MAN—Oh, I've made a smudge of my life here, and that's the last word on it! Tomorrow my accounts will be turned in at the annual meeting, and then I'll skip.

OTHER MAN—Come in and have some dinner; you'll feel better after you've had a cocktail and something to eat. I don't like this draught. What's your reason for standing out here?

THE MAN—Thought it might blow me out like a cheap candle, I guess. It would be the easiest way.

OTHER MAN—Look here, Bob, what's the matter? You're in a bad way. You'd better come and have your sandwich with me.

[Enter THE WAITER, from the main café.]

THE MAN—Oh, all right, thanks; maybe I will! Don't wait for me. I want some more fresh air before I go into that inferno.

OTHER MAN—Just as you say. See you later! *[He goes into the café.]*

WAITER—*[to THE MAN]* Then you won't want a table, will you, sir?

THE MAN—Oh, yes, I will! That was only a bluff to get rid of him. Me for a table all right. *[THE WAITER exits R.]*

THE MAN—One more drink—one more "rag"—and then—what? *[He takes the revolver from his pocket, shudders, then turns abruptly up the stairway as though to flee, when THE WOMAN suddenly enters at center.]*

[She lurches forward and almost falls. THE MAN rushes up and steadies her, a look of disgust upon his face. She turns a white face to him and gasps her thanks. His expression changes to one of pity when he sees her despair.]

[Enter THE WAITER, R. carrying a tray holding several full cocktail glasses. THE MAN takes one and offers it to THE WOMAN. She thrusts it away with repulsion. He quickly guides

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her into Box one, catches up a water bottle from the table, fills a glass and offers it to her.] Here, drink this! [He looks about, bewildered, as though wondering what he shall do with her.]

THE WOMAN—[sets her lips firmly and pushes the glass away] The lights made me giddy. I'm all right.—Don't bother about me.

THE MAN—Where do you want to go? I can't leave you here. You look star—*faint*, I mean.

THE WOMAN—[looking up quickly, springs to her feet] Oh, I know you! You are one of *his* kind. You sit in his fine office every day behind his plate glass windows. Oh, yes, you think you're mighty fine, you do, sitting there casting up their cash! Maybe you cast up a little on the wrong side now and then, eh, to pay for all your fine clothes and theater tickets! [He makes a quick movement as though to silence her.] I know you well enough in your old cap. I suppose you think nobody knows you in that disguise!

THE MAN—For God's sake, hush; you'll have the whole crowd in here!

THE WOMAN—What if I do?

THE MAN—You're mistaken if you think you know me. I assure you I have never seen you before.

THE WOMAN—[sneeringly] Maybe not!

THE MAN—[with familiarity] But that's not saying I wouldn't like to know you better. Come, take a bracer and jolly up! So you know me, do you? [turning her face up] I bet I've never seen those pretty eyes before.

THE WOMAN—Oh, I know you well enough; though I haven't the *honor* of a speaking acquaintance!

THE MAN—[recklessly] Well, now's your chance! I'm the sure thing, all right. What's the diff who we are? [He drains the cocktail glass.] We'll have some more of these. What do you say—Polly?—Maud?—Maggie?—Where's your visiting card? [He reaches out to touch the electric bell button on the wall.]

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THE WOMAN—*[catching his arm]* Yes—you're all alike! Just one of his kind. I know most of his friends by sight, even if I'm not good enough to talk to 'em.

THE MAN—*[impressed by her manner]* *Who are you?*—And who is *he*?

THE WOMAN—*[drawing him to the glass doors of the main café, and pointing within]* There! Look over at that table in the corner, the round one. Do you see that dark fellow that looks as if the earth's not good enough for him? Noble looking, ain't he?

THE MAN—Kent!

THE WOMAN—Yes—Kent! Well, that's "*he*!" And I? Well! I'm the girl he ought to marry, that's all.—Now, as you're so curious, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to get a little straighter first, in my head—then I'm going to stand behind his chair—and shoot him like a dog, do you hear?—and then—I'm going to shoot—myself! *[She staggers, exhausted, and he supports her.]*

THE MAN—*[gazes into the café with horror-stricken eyes]* Kent! My God! *[He guides THE WOMAN again to the Box and seats her at the table.]*

[Enter THE WAITER, R. He stands at the Box entrance.]

THE MAN—Coffee! And sandwiches for two. Rush order!

WAITER—Very well, sir. *[He discreetly flicks his napkin over the table, and exits R.]*

THE MAN—*[hangs up his cap and pushes back his disordered hair. He takes off THE WOMAN's hat and tries to take off her jacket, but she repulses him. He again offers her the glass of water which she takes and drinks mechanically, seeming scarcely to be aware of his presence.]*

THE WOMAN—*[finally straightens up and looks around, faintly]* I'm keeping you from your dinner.

THE MAN—Oh, that's all right! I'm not worrying about myself. I was awhile ago; now I've got something bigger to think about.

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[Enter THE WAITER, R. with coffee, sandwiches and service on tray. He pours the coffee into two cups.] Sugar? [serves] Cream? [serves] Anything more, sir?

THE MAN—That's all. I'll ring if I want anything more.
[THE WAITER nods and exits R. As THE WOMAN shows no signs of either eating or drinking THE MAN places her cup in her hand. She looks up, dazed, then drinks. He offers her the sandwiches and she eats mechanically. He eats and drinks.]

THE WOMAN—[beginning to realize her surroundings again] How'd you know I was hungry?

THE MAN—Oh, I—er—just guessed! It's dinner-time, you know.

THE WOMAN—I'll be all right. It was only a turn—like I'm used to.

THE MAN—A turn, yes! A sudden turning—and a different outlook!

THE WOMAN—[suspiciously] Eh?

THE MAN—[half to himself] So the tragedy shifts! The chain tightens and strains at the links!

THE WOMAN—I don't know what you mean.

THE MAN—[laying his hand gently on hers] Now you're better. Tell me all about it. Surely you had no such wild plan in your head when you came here!

THE WOMAN—I ask your pardon. You're not his kind after all. You've saved him this time, but it won't be long before he's got to answer for it!

THE MAN—Will the darkening of many lives justify your act? There is no wrong that can be righted in the way you have chosen.

THE WOMAN—You're not a minister, are you?

THE MAN—A minister? Hell!—No! Why do you ask?

THE WOMAN—Sounds like preaching.

THE MAN—I'm the one that needs the sermon. Look here,

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girl—pull yourself together! Go home and pick up your life again; don't fling it away like this.

THE WOMAN—Home! Where's that? "Where the heart is," eh? Out there? [*motioning toward the café*] Or back to the old place? A nice fortune to carry back to the old folks, ain't it?

THE MAN—A better one than the tragic despatch in a morning paper—"One more murder and suicide added to the long list!" What good will it do you to carry two blackened lives into eternity? He'll get his punishment sooner or later—and you? Why not pocket your misfortune and outlive it?

THE WOMAN—How many people—women, I mean—will help me to pocket it if I go home to Glennville?

THE MAN—[*something striking him*] What Glennville?

THE WOMAN—Ohio.

THE MAN—[*glancing at her keenly*] Why, that's my town! How long have you been away from it?

THE WOMAN—[*wearily*] Oh, months—and years! Long enough to live my life out.

THE MAN—And your name?

THE WOMAN—[*suspiciously*] What's that to you?

THE MAN—[*gently*] You took me for your friend, you know.

THE WOMAN—A friend! [*Her head drops on her arms, and she sobs convulsively.*]

[THE MAN rises hastily with the impulse to get away. The revolver in his pocket strikes the table edge. With a shamed look he draws it from his pocket and lays it on the shelf above him. Snatches of gay music and the popping of corks are heard from the café.]

THE WOMAN—[*Her sobs slowly cease.*] My name was Sarah Baxter.

THE MAN—[*starting*] Not little Sal?—[*She gazes at him fixedly.*] Sally—whom I carried pick-a-back to pasture when the cows came in?—Little Sal with the brown eyes and saucy nose?

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THE WOMAN—[*springs up and grasps his hands*] Bob Stirling! Oh, Bob, Bob!

BOB—[*slowly*] Little Sal! The sunset's in our eyes, Sally—and can't you hear the cowbells tinkling—tinkling?

SALLY—[*dreamily*] Yes—and hear the echo over the hill, Bob! They're going home.—I can smell the new milk—and see the flowers, Bob, the flowers!

BOB—Yes—the flowers. *You* were one of the flowers, Sal!

SALLY—You left us long ago to make your fortune.

BOB—Fortune, eh? That's good!

SALLY—The paths of men are easy, ours so hard! Oh, Bob! Save me—save me!

BOB—[*bitterly*] Fortune! Yes, my fortune's made! [*Sally sinks down again and buries her face.*] A striped suit—three meals a day—a cell, a broom to make—or work on the road! A fortune indeed!

SALLY—What do you mean?

BOB—Why did you leave home?

SALLY—Why did I? Why is anybody such a fool as to leave home? Oh, I was restless—restless! The boys could go out into the world, why couldn't I? You slave away all your life on the old farm and what do you get for it? I came out here with a lot of other girls—they told us wages were high, and anybody could find work. Everything was dead easy! It was a great lark. We just thought your golden showers out here would most drown us! [*laughing unsteadily*]

BOB—Yes, I've heard of those showers myself!

SALLY—They said there wasn't enough girls out here. They said fine places in shops were just waiting for us. That was a lie—there was too many women for the shops. So I took up housework.—I guess you don't know what it is to work in a house where they think you're just a common machine, and when you get tired and dazed-like—and—and a bit homesick—they think you're lazy!

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BOB—Why didn't you drop it all and go home?

SALLY—Go home? And me writing them about the fortune I was making, and the grand times I was having?

BOB—You always were a brave kid, Sal.

SALLY—The other girls, they liked to go out nights, and I got like the rest. The streets was gay, and the lights was kind o' cheerful after you'd been shut in all day.—

BOB—Well? Tell me more, Sally.

SALLY—I know what you're thinking—but it isn't so! I kept straight. There was nothing in it for me except the good times, and to be where everything was cheerful and bright. Oh, yes, sometimes I'd go to a dance, but I wasn't much stuck on the men I'd meet there, so I cut out dances. [*Bob looks out toward the main café.*] Oh, *him?* I didn't meet him at no dances; I met him in my last place—I was working for his mother.

BOB—[*between his teeth*] Beast!

SALLY—O' course I knew they was better than me, but he thought I was pretty nice at first. Then he wanted to get me away from there—he said he could see me oftener. Oh, he was slick enough!—And it all looked mighty nice to me. Him and me's been living in an apartment these last six months [*sneeringly*] and he *says* he's been trying to make things right so's we could be married; but he ain't been near me lately. Marry *me?* Nixey! I don't see *him!* [*Her eyes grow wild again.*] Oh, I hate him! I do, I do! [*She springs to the Box entrance.*]

BOB—[*catching her by the arm*] No! Listen to me, Sal. [*She turns to him at the old name.*] You're going home tomorrow. I have money—[*shrugging his shoulders*]—a little more or less, what does it matter? You're going home, I say, and you're going to take with you your good name!

SALLY—And you? What will you do? You're his friend—and mine!

[*Enter the OTHER MAN from the main café. He saunters out C.*]

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[SALLY starts toward him, but BOB holds her fast, and by force of will keeps her quiet.]

SALLY—He's gone! I'll not see him again for days perhaps. I tracked him here tonight on chance.

BOB—Listen to me!—Give me the pistol!—And listen to me! [She clutches her jacket pocket where she has the weapon concealed.] I want to make a compact with you. [SALLY catches sight of his pistol on the shelf. She snatches it and poises it in the air.] That's mine. [coolly] I want to tell you something. Two lives are saved tonight for something better or worse, who knows! Put that down on the table. [As though hypnotized, she obeys him.] There—now put your own beside it!—That's right. A pretty pair, aren't they? A dozen lives they hold between them. [SALLY shudders.] Do you know what you have saved me from? A column in tomorrow's paper too—Oh, yes, you're not the only one! No matter what I've done; it can't affect you one way or the other, only you're a pretty good guesser! I've changed my mind since I met you tonight. I have some old folks at home, too, who are waiting for me and my fortune. You're to start home tomorrow morning, and you're going to carry them my message.—Tell them—I'll be working hard for a year or so, and then I'm coming home. If ever I can repay you I'll try—in the years to come—if there are any left—afterward!

SALLY—Bob! Oh, Bob!

BOB—I'm going to take you back now—wherever you sleep. In the morning you're going home—Sally!

SALLY—Will they take me, do you think, Bob?

BOB—Why, Sal, can't you see their faces welcoming you?
[pause]

SALLY—Yes, Bob—I'll go.

BOB—Stay here, I'll call a taxi. [She sits as BOB goes toward the stairway. As he reaches the foot of the stairs—]

[Enter THE OTHER MAN, C.]

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OTHER MAN—*[coming hurriedly down the stairs]* Hello, Bob! I forgot all about you! Nice thing to do, wasn't it? Came back to look for you. Why didn't you come in, eh?

[At the sound of his voice SALLY starts up and stands at the Box entrance.]

BOB—*[motions for her to keep back, and stands partially screening her]* Well I didn't forget you, Kent! I wish I could!

KENT—Haven't got over your grouch, eh? Oh, you're engaged I see! I beg your pardon! I merely thought I might have the pleasure of paying for your dinner, that's all!

BOB—There comes a time when every man has got to pay, Kent; not only for his dinner but for everything. That time has come to you and me—*right here and now!* *[He steps aside revealing SALLY.]* Keep quiet, Sal; you needn't say a word! He knows all there is to say that you can tell him. *[KENT starts a trifle when he sees SALLY, then deliberately gives his attention to BOB.]* Yes, I know Sally; she was a friend of mine back in the old town. I thought I knew you, Kent, but I've found I was mistaken. You think you know me, but you're mistaken too!

[Enter THE WAITER, R.]

Here, boy, call a taxi for me! *[Exit WAITER, C.]* I'm going to send this child home tomorrow morning on your money, Kent—yes, *your money* that I've been living on for the last year or so—I'll do some good with it at last! I came here in a bad way tonight, and I expected by now to be on my way to Kingdom come!—but there are worse troubles than mine—and this little woman has saved me!

[Enter THE WAITER, C.]

WAITER—Taxi's waiting outside, sir.

BOB—All right. Come, Sally, you're going home. *[He takes her arm as she stumbles up the stairway. THE WAITER starts forward to assist, follows them and stands obsequiously at the head of the stairs. BOB nods toward Box one.]* You'll find your tip on the table. *[THE WAITER bows his thanks, and comes down, looking back at them curiously.]* I'll see you at the

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meeting tomorrow, Kent. I've changed my mind about not being there. I'll be on hand, all right, and my accounts are all ready to turn in. *Have yours ready for me! Come, Sal! Home tomorrow, Sal!* [*They exeunt, C.*]

[KENT stands a moment, rigid, then buttons up his coat tightly.]

WAITER—[obsequiously] Table, sir?

KENT—No! Go to hell! Can't you see I've dined? [*He clinches his teeth firmly on his cigar, and exits C.*]

WAITER—"Go to hell," is it? Nix! I might have to see too much o' you! [*He stands a moment looking after KENT, then remembering his tip, goes hastily into Box one. He discovers the two pistols on the table. Lifting one in each hand he surveys them with great surprise as*]—

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

A MODERN MENAGE • *A Tragic Farce*

[CHARACTERS]

CARL GILLESPIE, a near-business man.

MRS. GILLESPIE, usually "Twink."

DR. GRAHAM.

FOOGI, a Japanese maid.

THE INFANT.

[SCENE]

The living-room of the Gillespies' American bungalow home. It is simply but comfortably furnished with a couch, chairs and small table at right, dining-table and buffet at left. Two dining chairs are near the table. The entrances are at center and down left. Through the center entrance are seen the last two or three steps of the stairway leading down from above at right. The hall leads to the outside entrance of the house at left. A door down left opens into the kitchen.



A MODERN MENAGE • *A Tragic Farce*

*A*T curtain the front door-bell is ringing loudly. THE INFANT'S loud crying is heard from upstairs.

[Enter FOOGI, running downstairs. She crosses the doorway C. and goes to open the front door. In response to an inquiry she is heard to say:]

No! Ladee not home, not home. [She bangs the door and runs back just as another loud cry from THE INFANT is heard, and the sound of something falling. It is THE INFANT tumbling downstairs. FOOGI rushes up to him and is heard comforting him. He cries spasmodically with *diminuendo*.]

FOOGI—Ay yi! The bad step—*bad step!* Did bump head?—Where you hurt self?—Ay yi!

[The sound of a latch-key is heard and the opening and shutting of the front door, a cheery whistle in the hall.]

[Enter CARL GILLESPIE, C. He is young and well-dressed. A good-looking man not long out of college. He stands C.E. addressing FOOGI on the stairs. She has gone up out of sight of the audience. THE INFANT still cries slightly.]

GILLESPIE—Bring him here. Hello, Dad's boy! What's the matter, kid?

FOOGI—He much sleepy, think.

GILLESPIE—Sleepy? Nonsense! Didn't he get his nap today? [snapping his fingers] Wake up, lazy-bones! Come and fight your dad! [THE INFANT cries.] Gee whiz! *Don't* then! Take him along! [The cries grow fainter as FOOGI bears him aloft.]

GILLESPIE—[whistles and enters the living-room] Yoo-who!—Twink! Where art thou, my cherished one? [silence] Yoo-who! [He looks into the kitchen.] Yoo-who!—No starling's in sight! Orbit's empty! [He enters the kitchen and rattles the kettle-top. Re-enters the living-room.] So's the kitchen. No feed in sight, and me with a square-foot space in-

A MODERN MENAGE

side. [*Goes to the foot of the stairs.*] Cherry-blossom!—Iris!—
what is her damned name anyway! Say!

FOOGI—[*from above*] Any caller me?

GILLESPIE—Yes, what's your name? I wasn't introduced yesterday.

FOOGI—Name?

GILLESPIE—Yes, *name*—your name. What I call you?

FOOGI—[*comes down and stands on the last step*] You call me?
What want?

GILLESPIE—Oh, Lord! Solid ivory! Somebody give me a billiard cue!

FOOGI—No have got.

GILLESPIE—Where's your mistress? Where's Mrs. Gillespie?

FOOGI—No un'stan' Gillesp'.

GILLESPIE—The *lady*—where's the lady?

FOOGI—Oh! *Ladee!* Ladee she go out long time. [THE INFANT *cries.*]

GILLESPIE—She go out, eh? Where's the dinner? Why aren't you getting it?

FOOGI—No dinner. Babbee kli all time. [THE INFANT *cries.*
FOOGI *goes up.*]

GILLESPIE—[*with an impatient shrug, re-enters the room*] It's darned mean of Twink to go off like this. Another "Bridge fight," I suppose! [*The sound of a latch-key is heard in the front door, and a brisk entrance into the hall. GILLESPIE, posing as injured innocence, stands at L, half facing C. E.*]

[*Enter MRS. GILLESPIE, C. E. The picture of health and spirits. She carries a shopping bag and several parcels.*]

MRS. G.—Oh, hello, Carly boy! What are you doing home so early? [*At sight of her his anger melts visibly and by the time she reaches him he is quite ready to greet her lovingly.*]

GILLESPIE—[*reproachfully*] Early? [*shows her his watch*]

MRS. G.—[*horrified*] Good heavens! It isn't! [*snatching her own*

A MODERN MENAGE

watch out of her handbag, dropping it, then holding it to her ear
Little beast! I never *can* depend upon it! *There now*, you'll say it's because I dropped it, when you know very well I'm not in the habit of doing it!

GILLESPIE—Never mind, Twink, I'll believe that's the first time today.

MRS. G.—You'd better! [*laughing guiltily*] 'Tisn't tho! [*merrily*] I nearly died this afternoon catching a car. Ran around the end of it, and of course it was one of those *push-as-you-enter* fiends. I opened my bag and fell up the steps. Out flew my watch and a big, fat brute in front of me put his heel on it. The *least* he could do was to pay my fare! [*worried, she shakes the watch at her ear*] I do wish I had a watch I could depend on!

GILLESPIE—[*with mock severity*] May I enquire, Madam, if you are in the habit of falling over polite gentlemen who pay your fare? [*She laughs delightedly.*] Here, give me that long-suffering bit of iron. I'll take it to a blacksmith! [*She hands him the watch.*]

MRS. G.—Oh, Carly, I'm dead tired! [*taking off her hat and coat*] Have you seen Kiddums? Isn't he the quiet lamb!

GILLESPIE—[*sotto voce*] Quiet! [THE INFANT *cries.*]

MRS. G.—[*running to the foot of the stairs*] There's no sense in her *letting* him cry! All he wants is to be amused.

GILLESPIE—I guess they amuse each other all right! The kid was so absorbed in his own particular kind of amusement when I came home that he wouldn't even look at me.

MRS. G.—She's probably been neglecting him. They *are* so careless. Maybe she's left him alone up there. I'll run up and see to him while Foogi brings in dinner.

GILLESPIE—Who—o—gi?

MRS. G.—Don't be an idiot! Foogi! F, double o-g-i! [*She opens the kitchen door.*] You may bring in dinner, Foogi. Foogi! Foogi! Well—will you look at that peaceful stove? [*glancing at the dining-table*] And the table only half set!

A MODERN MENAGE

[*disgustedly*] Oh, this "help" problem is getting past all standing! She was recommended as a "treasure," if you please! Her husband brought her and said she "ver' smart." In fact, she "knew too much!"

GILLESPIE—[*ironically*] Impossible!

MRS. G.—[*gathers up her hat, coat, and bundles, then puts the bundles down again on the couch*] No, I must show you those. I've got some of the sweetest bargains! [*rapidly, in the doorway*] Now, I tell you what you do while I'm upstairs. See if Foogi brought the meat in from the ice-box, and put on the kettle, there's a dear boy, and I'll send her down in a minute. [*Exit C. E.*]

GILLESPIE—[*with a heavy sigh, exits into the kitchen. THE INFANT cries, the telephone on the table rings. GILLESPIE re-enters, not having heard the telephone*] Hang it! I can't find any meat! [*Goes to the stair-foot and yells.*] Twink! I can't find any meat! [*THE INFANT cries, the telephone rings again, the door-bell rings. GILLESPIE looks distractedly from one to the other, then goes to the phone. FOOGI comes down and goes to the front door whence a man's voice and hers are heard in parley.*]

GILLESPIE—[*at 'phone*] Hello!—yes—got me first time! *Who* did you say you were?—Oh, yes! [*He nearly drops the receiver in dismay.*] Oh, y-e-s! Mr. Delafield! Yes, it was very unfortunate I had to be out this afternoon when you called. Yes, I know; I generally *do* keep my appointments.—I'm awfully sorry!—You couldn't see me tomorrow morning, could you? You've made other arrangements?—I see!—I see! Thank you, good-by! [*Hangs up with a blank look.*] Well, of all the infernal chumps—I'm the limit!

FOOGI—[*is heard outside remonstrating, then enters with a bill which she gives to GILLESPIE. He stares at it.*]

GILLESPIE—Why, this was paid weeks ago!

FOOGI—Man say: "No pay, no meat!" He write—see! [*She points to the back of the bill.*]

GILLESPIE—[*reads*] "I have called several times with this account but can never find the lady at home. Would esteem

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it a great favor if you will remit as soon as possible. Yours respectfully, James Blodgett. Dealer in choice meats and poultry. Cold storage a specialty." Hm! Deals out the cold day with a glad hand!—All right, Foogi; you tell man, I send tomorrow—send tomorrow—see?

FOOGI—[*mechanically*] I send tomorrow—send tomorrow, see?

GILLESPIE—Wait! *Gentleman* send tomorrow, see?

FOOGI—Yis! *Gentleman* send tomorrow, see? [*Exit. She is heard remonstrating at the front door.*]

GILLESPIE—[*going to C. E., calls*] That'll be all right. I'll send a check tomorrow. [FOOGI *bangs the front door and returns to C. E.*] See here, *Whoogi*, you tell lady I find no meat.

FOOGI—[*smiling coyly*] Man say, "no pay, no meat!"

GILLESPIE—[*with dawning intelligence*] I see! I see! You go tell lady there's no meat. Ask her what we'll have. Great Scott! I'll eat The Infant if she doesn't hurry! [FOOGI *exits, giggling delightedly. GILLESPIE whistles cheerfully. He tries to finish setting the table, but only succeeds in mixing up the articles on it. He moves a large bowl of flowers from the small table and places it in the center of the dining table, thereby obscuring most of the service.*]

[*Enter FOOGI.*]

FOOGI—Ladee say, "schlimpy."

GILLESPIE—[*meditatively*] Schlimpy!—Um—schlimpy? What in thunder is schlimpy!

FOOGI—Schlimpy ver' nice.

GILLESPIE—I believe you! [*going to stair-foot, he yells*] Twink! What the deuce is schlimpy, and where found?

MRS. G.—[*from above*] S-h-rimps, you goose! Find them in the ice-box. Let's have some, "Spanish." Let's have a good old college feed!

GILLESPIE—Oh, sure! You find the "Spanish," Foogi, while I

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cast me net for schlimpy. [FOOGI is bewildered.] "Spanish!" Tomato sauce—in bottle. There—maybe on buffet, see? [He goes into the kitchen.]

FOOGI—[Goes to the buffet; searches, plainly without knowing what she is looking for. Then suddenly she looks on the floor in the corner, beside the buffet, and hurriedly takes a brush hanging near and sweeps something back into the corner.]

[Enter GILLESPIE carrying the shrimps in a bowl which he places on the dining-table. He gets a fork and spoon from the buffet.]

FOOGI—No can find "Spanish"—sauce bottle.

GILLESPIE—Run up and ask the lady where it is. [Exit FOOGI. Gillespie picks over the shrimps.]

MRS. G.—[from above] What is it you want, Carly?

GILLESPIE—"Spanish." Where's the tomato catsup?

MRS. G.—[very loudly] Oh—"Spanish!" Why, on the buffet where it always is! I wish you wouldn't yell so, Carl, you'll wake Kiddums. [THE INFANT cries.] There—I knew you would!

GILLESPIE—[grins, goes to buffet] "Where it always is!" [Not seeing it, he peers into the corner.] Gee whiz! What a mess! [He stoops to investigate and cuts his finger on broken glass. He twists his handkerchief around it.]

[Enter FOOGI.]

FOOGI—Ladee say: "Where bottle?"

GILLESPIE—What bottle? There's a bottle, broken, behind there! [pointing] There's the "Spanish!" Whoogi broke that?

FOOGI—[with pretended innocence] Oh—too bad!

GILLESPIE—Yes, "too bad!" What bottle does lady want? That bottle?

FOOGI—[giggling] No! No! Babbee's bottle.

GILLESPIE—"Babbee's" bottle! Does she think I take it to the office? [He goes to the stair-foot.] Twink! Oh, Twink! What bottle are you talking about? [FOOGI is busy at the table.]

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MRS. G.—[*from above*] Why, Kiddum's bottle, dear! What did you do with the other when you gave him one last night?

GILLESPIE—O-o-h! Gee! I chucked it under the bed. It wouldn't work. Kiddums fired it at me. You'd better send him crawling under for it; it's all his fault.

MRS. G.—[*sweetly*] You unfeeling brute! He's asleep now.

GILLESPIE—And say, Twink, where's the witch hazel? I've cut my finger.

MRS. G.—Why, dearie, I'm so sorry! Is it bad? The Infant drank all the witch hazel there was day before yesterday. Don't you remember I had to call Dr. Graham?

GILLESPIE—Oh, sure enough! [*He twists his handkerchief again around his finger. To FOOGI.*] Here, please, tie this; tie, tie, tie! [*She knots the ends and he takes the dish of shrimps and goes into the kitchen.*] Fix the table, Fujiyama! Now for a good old college feed! Oh, you Twink! [*He is heard rattling the stove. FOOGI finishes setting the table. GILLESPIE stands in the kitchen doorway.*] I suppose you've never been to college, my poor girl! At college one learns to make the best of all the impractical situations of life! In the seething cauldron of —[*a hissing sound is heard from the kitchen, he turns hastily*] Great Scott! The kettle! [*He is heard rattling the kettle-top, and whistling.*]

[*Enter MRS. GILLESPIE, C. E. She speaks loudly and distinctly to FOOGI, emphasizing about every third word in an effort to be understood.*]

MRS. G.—Foogi! Go upstairs now. The baby is taking bottle. You stay with him—watch! Make him eat his dinner—not socks—not bed-clothes! [*GILLESPIE returns to the kitchen entrance.*] Would you believe it, Carly, that wretch we had last week let him eat about six of those little tufts off his comforter! At least, I *suppose* he ate them. They were gone!

GILLESPIE—Modest kid! Conceals his carnivorous feats!

MRS. G.—He's a duck! I heard the sweetest lecture today about the hours a mother spends with her child!

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GILLESPIE—Come and have a look at these shrimps. I decided to cream them instead. [*He puts his arm around her and draws her into the kitchen.*] The kettle's boiling; you make the coffee, Twink. [*pause*]

MRS. G.—Those are great. [*returning to the living-room*] Your major at college was chafing-dish recipes, wasn't it?—Or was it cigarettes? [*She goes to the buffet and gets a coffee percolator.*] My dear! I'm hungry! I only had time to eat a bite of salad and a cream puff for lunch.

GILLESPIE—[*standing reproachfully in the doorway as she tries to pass*] Take that back!

MRS. G.—[*innocently*] What? Don't you want your coffee percolated tonight? Oh! [*laughing*] The cigarettes! Well, that was mean of me! Call it *pipes*, if you like! [*He kisses her and lets her pass.*] Take in your shrimps, Carlo, and I'll bring the bread and olives.

GILLESPIE—[*entering with the shrimps in a bowl which he places on the table*] Never mind a dish tonight—it'll savewashing. [*pause*]

MRS. G.—[*entering with bread and a bottle of olives*] Well, you needn't be so economical! I'm a real lady tonight; we have a minion to wash our dishes! Run out and get the rest of the cream. [GILLESPIE *exits to kitchen.*] Wasn't he the dear, artistic boy to remember the decorations! [*She pushes the flowers back to make room for the eatables. Enter GILLESPIE with a bottle of cream. He opens the olive bottle, she slices bread. She is R. of table, he stands L.*]

GILLESPIE—Well, what was doing today?

MRS. G.—I've simply rushed all day. [*rapidly checking off on her fingers*] Shopped early; loveliest bargains you ever saw at Levison's! [*starting up toward her parcels*]

GILLESPIE—For heaven's sake, *sit down*, Twink! Let's eat!

MRS. G.—[*resuming her checking*] Class in infant psychology at eleven, awfully interesting, and we got talking and forgot the time so I couldn't come home to lunch. Then there was Ivy

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Littleton's stocking "shower" at two, but I couldn't stay long at that because I'd promised Alice Kingston to drop in at refreshment time after her "bridge"—and a lot of the girls came in late—and—

GILLESPIE—[*having finished opening the olive bottle*] My dear girl—cut it out!—er—*cut bread!*

MRS. G.—Oh, yes! and—[*there is a loud cry from THE INFANT and the sound of something dropped. They rise and listen.*]

MRS. G.—[*resignedly*] There! Another bottle! That's the third this week! [*They sit.*]

GILLESPIE—[*feels in his money pocket; draws out a handful of small change, and looks at it ruefully*] By the way, dear, a collector just came from the butcher. How was it you didn't pay that bill?

MRS. G.—Why, Carly, you said you'd send a check from the office! Don't you remember month before last you said you thought you'd run the butcher's bill for a change?

GILLESPIE—[*sheepishly*] Why, yes, so I did! Wouldn't it be cheaper and safer for The Infant to eat meat instead of breaking so many bottles?

MRS. G.—[*reproachfully*] My dear! That is just the exuberance of youthful energy which we are told we must not check. [THE INFANT continues to howl.] I must go and see what is the matter. Eat your dinner, Carly, it's getting cold. [*She exits, and he begins to eat hurriedly. Suddenly there comes a scream from MRS. GILLESPIE, and he, running to meet her as she comes hurriedly down, catches her in his arms. She carries a child's white dress and skirt, stained with bright red spots which she displays to his horrified gaze.*]

MRS. G.—[*sobbing*] Oh, Carly, Carly! What awful thing has happened to him? He's so hot, and cries all the time! I didn't see these at first; Foogi had taken them off, and he was all covered up. Oh, I'm afraid to look! Telephone for the doctor, quick, quick! I'm sure he's dying! My baby's dying! [*She sinks in a spasm of sobs on the couch while GILLESPIE calls up the doctor.*]

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GILLESPIE—Hello! Central—quick—Give me Oak 1904—yes—(well, she got it, first time on record!)—Oak 1904? Dr. Graham? Yes, can you come right over here, Doctor? The Infant seems to be a little upset, [MRS. G. *sits up indignantly*. “Upset!”] and my wife’s nervous over him. Thank you, yes, right here, please! Oh, *here* means Gillespie’s down on the corner! All right, thanks, good-by! [*He hangs up, surveys the dress and skirt.*] Gee! That looks bad! No wonder he wouldn’t play when I got home. I don’t want to reproach you, Twink, but don’t you think it would be better for the kid if you let some of these outside things go? [THE INFANT *cries.*]

MRS. G.—Oh, Carl! [*She puts down her head and sobs again.*]

GILLESPIE—[*conscience-stricken*] There, there! I’m a brute! Gee whiz! I suppose that coffee’s boiled all over the place! [*He bolts for the kitchen, and returns with the steaming coffee pot; places it on the table.*] Come and take a cup, dear. You must brace up before the doctor comes.

MRS. G.—I can’t take a bit. [*sobbing*] You eat your supper.

GILLESPIE—[*goes to the table. The shrimps are now cold and he turns them over distastefully.*] I’m not so hungry now somehow. [*He pours out a cup of coffee, drinks part of it, then carries another cup to her. He tries to tempt her with a spoonful.*] Here, Twink! Brace up! [*She takes a few spoonfuls, smiling dolefully as he feeds her.*]

[*There is a ring at the front door, and GILLESPIE exits to admit DR. GRAHAM, a tall, grave man of middle-age. He leaves his hat and coat in the hall.*]

DR. GRAHAM—[*smiling kindly as he greets MRS. GILLESPIE*] Good-evening, Mrs. Gillespie. What’s the trouble this time? I’m sorry the boy needs me so soon again.

MRS. G.—Oh, doctor, I don’t know! I came home late—and the maid had put him to bed—and I just found these—[*showing him the clothes*] Oh, he must be terribly hurt some way!

DR. G.—[*examining the clothes*] Why, my dear lady! But I must see the child! Every minute counts.

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GILLESPIE—Come upstairs, Doctor.

DR. G.—We'll probably need some hot water immediately.
Can you tell your maid? [*to MRS. GILLESPIE*]

MRS. G.—Oh, Carly, dear, you put on the kettle! Foogi'll never understand. I'll send her down. Come, Dr. Graham.
[*They exeunt, the doctor carrying the stained clothes. Exit GILLESPIE into the kitchen.*]

[*Enter FOOGI. She goes to the table and begins to clear it, taking the eatables into the kitchen, and putting the plates and small articles on the buffet.*]

[*Enter GILLESPIE. He carries a small copy-book.*] Foogi! [*She starts and looks at him demurely.*] What you do all day?

FOOGI—Work—alle day! Take care babbee. Ver' good, nice babbee!

[*THE INFANT cries.*]

GILLESPIE—What makes the baby cry? What you do to him?

FOOGI—Aw! Ver' good, nice babbee! No much kli!

GILLESPIE—He is crying too much now. He's sick—baby's sick. Don't you know why he cries?

FOOGI—Aw! Babbee sick? Too bad! Ver' bad!

GILLESPIE—[*impatiently*] Yes, too bad! [*He shows her the copy-book.*] See, here! Is this yours? Is this what you do all day? I pay you to work, take care baby, not write all day!

FOOGI—[*sullenly*] Aw! Write li'l—can no alle time work! Babbee sleep sometime. Foogi write, study—same 'Mer'-can girl.

GILLESPIE—[*groaning*] “'Mer'can” girl! What was the baby crying about when I came home tonight?

FOOGI—[*innocently*] Kli? Babbee kli? Ver' nice babbee!

GILLESPIE—[*insistently*] Something has happened to him. He fall down? Where did he fall down?

FOOGI—[*reproachfully*] Aw! No fall down! No! Ver' nice, good babbee!

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GILLESPIE—Oh, this is hopeless! Clear the table! *Clear the table!* [*He stands at the foot of the stairs and listens, then turns away with a sigh.*] Let me know when that water boils— [*pointing*] *water boils!*

FOOGI—[*meekly*] Yis, Mis' Gillespie'. [*Exits into kitchen.*]

GILLESPIE—[*starting up the stairs meets the others coming down. They enter.*]

DR. G.—I cannot really discover any cause for excessive alarm, Mr. Gillespie. He has considerable temperature, but I think that when his mother has made him comfortable he will probably go to sleep. After he has had the hot bath, Mrs. Gillespie, give him another of the powders.

MRS. G.—And you think he'll really, *really* be all right? That awful blood, Doctor, what can it be?

DR. G.—[*smiling gravely*] Nose-bleed probably. If not his, then someone else's; or his nurse may have cut her finger. I'll call early in the morning and make a more thorough investigation. Sleep seems to be what the child wants at present. I'll leave this prescription to be filled, Mr. Gillespie.

GILLESPIE—Yes, I'll go for it right away. Thank you so much for coming, Doctor, at this hour.

DR. G.—No thanks; that's what I'm for, giving prescriptions—only another name for advice which we're all fond of giving. Good-night. [*shaking hands with MRS. GILLESPIE*] Cheer up! Take my word for it, the little chap will be better in the morning. [*Exit.*]

MRS. G.—[*To MR. G. as he starts to follow.*] Oh, Carl! I'm sure he's concealing something. Ask him to tell *you* the truth. [*Exit GILLESPIE. She walks nervously up and down.*]

[*Enter GILLESPIE and DR. GRAHAM.*]

DR. G.—I am concealing nothing, Mrs. Gillespie. You are nervous and excited and are conjuring up phantoms. May I talk with you a little?

MRS. G.—Oh, I should love to have you!

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DR. G.—As soon as that water boils I'll go. Your dinner was disturbed by that little plague upstairs I'm afraid.

GILLESPIE—[*ruefully*] Well, yes, rather! But that's no matter.

DR. G.—Don't you know that you are playing right into my hands, into mine and all my fraternity's with this constant rush, rush, rush. Here's this little lady—how often of a morning do I see her running past my house for a car!

MRS. G.—[*hesitating*] Yes—this morning it was for the child psychology class!

DR. G.—[*slowly*] I've left one prescription for the baby. May I leave another? One that will benefit you both?

MRS. G.—Why, yes indeed!

DR. G.—Give him—more of his mother, Mrs. Gillespie. Study infant psychology at first hand; you've no idea how interesting it is. [MRS. G. *begins to sob.*] Pardon me if I distress you, but I see so many mistakes in going my rounds. Oh, we old people make them too!

GILLESPIE—Cheer up, Twink! It's all right.

MRS. G.—Oh, I'm a beast! A selfish beast! When you're slaving away at the office all day, here I am gadding about, and dear Kiddums getting killed!

GILLESPIE—[*guiltily*] Well, I'm not—er—slaving *all* the time, Twink. Guess I could stick to business better if I tried.

DR. G.—You're a stranger to me, Mr. Gillespie, although I've watched you grow up from a distance. Pardon an old friend of your father for speaking plainly. May I give you a prescription too?

GILLESPIE—Why, sure! I mean, *of course!* Glad to take it.

DR. G.—It may be a bitter pill. Will you swallow it?

GILLESPIE—Just watch me!

DR. G.—Mr. Delafield consulted me about you last week. Personally I knew almost nothing about you, but I told him that the son of such a father must amount to something, so he

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decided to make you the offer for which you had an opportunity this afternoon.

GILLESPIE—Yes—er—I—

DR. G.—Late this afternoon he told me that one of his boys had seen you at the baseball game.

GILLESPIE—[*ruefully*] Yes, an afternoon thrown away! The “Brown Bears” lost after all!

DR. G.—It was more than an afternoon thrown away, Mr. Gillespie. That was a fine offer from a splendid man that you missed; but, as he said, one of his first requirements was promptness. Well, a physician’s prescriptions should always be brief, and [*smiling*] we’re always afraid of our own medicine, you know. It’s *sometimes* effective! [*abruptly*] Good-by. I’ll call the first thing in the morning. Good-by. [*He hurries out, followed by GILLESPIE.*]

MRS. G.—[*rises, wipes her eyes. Seeing her parcels on the couch she throws them impatiently on the floor and kicks them under the couch.*]

[*Enter GILLESPIE.*]

GILLESPIE—Why, Twinkle-Star, what are you doing?

MRS. G.—I never want to see a bargain again! [*catching up the baby’s dress*] I must ask Foogi about this. Maybe she can throw some light on the subject.

GILLESPIE—No use, Twink, I’ve tried. You might as well try to get cream from water. [*He puts his arm around her. She notices his finger.*]

MRS. G.—Oh, poor finger! [*kissing it*] Is it very bad?

GILLESPIE—No, just a slight cut on a bit of broken glass. [*glancing toward the corner near the buffet*] Why—the dickens! Of course! Twink! There’s your bloody tragedy. [*He leads her to the corner and points.*] There’s your “Spanish,” broken to bits. Of course that’s The Infant’s work, while Whoogi struggled with the higher education. [*He shows MRS. G. the copy-book.*] Well—he was a small shrimp smeared “Spanish” all right! [*roaring with laughter*]

A MODERN MENAGE

MRS. G.—Oh, Carl! Do you really think? [*She dabs her finger in the corner and makes a new spot on the dress.*] It is! It is! An exact match! [*She sinks on the floor and laughs hysterically.*]

GILLESPIE—Trust you, old bargain hunter, to know a match when you see it!

MRS. G.—Carl! Don't! Oh, my little Kiddums! [*pressing the dress to her cheek*] Carly—do you know—the Doctor was right? The lecturer this morning said a whole lot about responsibility, and I've always hated that word, it sounds so middle-aged and awful, and I didn't listen to that part, but I liked the psychology part of it, the colors and all those things, you know, "as related to the child." [*Her voice unconsciously adopts a lecturer's tone.*]

GILLESPIE—Yes, but I've heard that the colors are really the least part of it. Do you know, Twink, I somehow feel different since I came home tonight? [*He helps her to rise.*] I think you and I have got to remember that we're grown up, don't you?

MRS. G.—[*soberly*] Yes—I—suppose so! [*He takes her in his arms.*]

FOOGI—[*appearing in the kitchen doorway. Short pause*] Water boil long time. [*They start.*]

MRS. G.—Oh, yes, we must go up to Kiddums! Foogi, bring the water. [FOOGI *exits into the kitchen, and re-appears with the steaming kettle. MR. and MRS. GILLESPIE go toward C. E., talking volubly, she with the dress and skirt over her arm.*]

GILLESPIE—No more baseball games for me!

MRS. G.—Oh, you don't need to get too old all at once, Carly! But I tell you! We'll have a calendar all fixed up, and when you get a baseball game, I'll balance it with a "shower"—and—

GILLESPIE—Well, perhaps about one a month—

MRS. G.—[*as they disappear up the stairs*] I'm sure I don't want one very often.—

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GILLESPIE—will do me——

Mrs. G.—They're silly things anyway——

FOOGI—*[stands at the foot of the stairs a moment, looking up]*
“Silly things anyway!” *[She giggles and ascends. THE IN-*
FANT *is heard crying as]*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE INVENTOR • *A Dramatic Sketch*

[CHARACTERS]

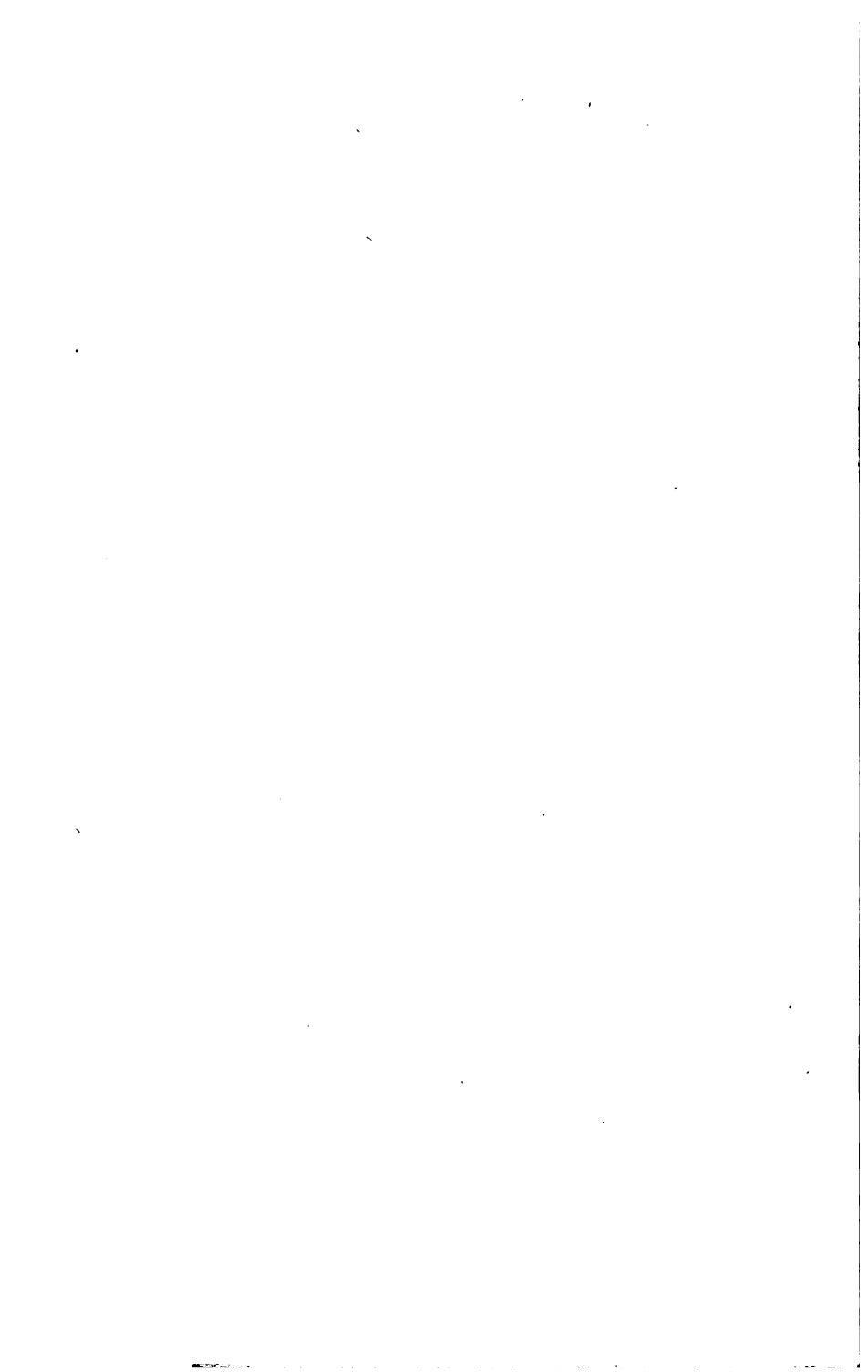
CLEM CURTIS.

MARY CURTIS.

BOB MATTHEWS.

[SCENE]

A cheap lodging-house bedroom. A bureau, table, and chair are at right, a bed is at left. The entrance from the hall is at center.



THE INVENTOR • *A Dramatic Sketch*

*A*T curtain a woman's sobs are heard from the adjoining room, left.

[Enter CLEM CURTIS and BOB MATTHEWS.]

[*They are of the average young American type of which one sees thousands every day. CLEM is rather better looking than BOB, and better dressed. He carries a roll of blue-prints and a newspaper. BOB, whose room it is, carries a loaf of bread and a package of cheese. Hearing the woman's sobs they pause at the entrance to listen.*]

CLEM—Say, Bob, what's the row?

BOB—Oh, that's a kid next door! She's been at it like that two or three times this week. [*He closes the door.*]

CLEM—Kid? That's no kid, that's a woman. [*He tosses the roll of prints on the bureau.*]

BOB—[*putting packages on bureau*] I don't mean exactly a kid, but I've caught glimpses of her going in and out a few times, and she looked pretty young and down on her luck. [*The sobbing ceases.*]

CLEM—Not a very cheerful neighbor, I should say. [*opening newspaper*]

BOB—No, but she's considerate, I'll say that for her. She always stops when she hears me come in.

CLEM—[*scanning the front page of the paper*] Hum! There it is. [*He looks rather pleased with himself.*]

BOB—[*looking over his shoulder*] Let's see. Good for you, old man! [*slapping CLEM on the back*] That's what success means.

CLEM—[*impatiently*] What's it all worth to me!

BOB—Say, what's the matter with you, Clem? You've got a grouch lately, worse than ever.

THE INVENTOR

CLEM—Well I guess I have, Bob. There's no use trying to hide it.

BOB—What's the trouble? Spit it out.

CLEM—Oh, dry up! It's enough to be soured on the world without bothering all your friends.

BOB—That's the kind of friend I am; made to be bothered.

CLEM—You're *all right*, Bob; you've stood a lot from me. I'll tell you—it's this way. A year ago I had a wife—

BOB—[*surprised*] First I knew about it!

CLEM——and a home and everything. There was a kid expected, and we were just waiting for that, thinking how happy we'd be.

BOB—And you busy, meanwhile, over your invention, I suppose?

CLEM—Yes, of course. Naturally I was busy over that. Some nights I couldn't go home at all. I couldn't really *work* at home.

BOB—Well, what happened?

CLEM—I came home one night and she wasn't there. Simply walked in and found the house empty, and—[*His voice breaks.*]

BOB—[*sympathetically*] And?

CLEM—And from that night to this I've never heard a word or found a trace. She made the cleverest get-away I ever saw.

BOB—Strange! Why should she go?

CLEM—They do say women are queer at such times.

BOB—How long ago was this?

CLEM—About eight months.

BOB—What did you do about trying to find her?

CLEM—I notified the police to work on the quiet. I did everything I could think of. The trouble is she left absolutely no clue to work on.

THE INVENTOR

BOB—Hum! Queer!

CLEM—And since then all my luck has come.

BOB—*All* your luck? Perhaps she thought *she* was part of your luck!

CLEM—Oh, well, you know what I mean! Your wife and your business are two different propositions.

BOB—Are they? I didn't know!

CLEM—Of course!

BOB—Maybe that's where you made a mistake.

CLEM—What do you know about it? You never had a wife.

BOB—No, nor invented anything. I never had brains enough!

CLEM—For which?

BOB—Both!

CLEM—Brains to get married! That doesn't take brains!

BOB—So you thought. That's where you were dead wrong.
But whatever it took, you didn't make a success of it, did you?
But I needn't talk. I don't know anything about women!

CLEM—Oh, come off!

BOB—Sure thing! I know there are two kinds—good and bad. The good ones are just like a fairy dream, out of my reach! And, well—er—*nix* on the bad ones!

CLEM—You're a queer duck!

BOB—Maybe!

CLEM—Well, mine turned out to be a "fairy dream," I guess! But I'll never stop looking for it to come back again. [*excitedly*] Sometimes the suspense is hell, Bob. I imagine all sorts of things. Sometimes I picture her the victim of some dreadful outrage; then again I get into a devil of a rage against her for leaving me like that. It just puts me back again a few years to the time when I hadn't any faith in the sex!

BOB—I don't see that they have anything on *us* in that respect!

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CLEM—Oh, well, what's the use! Let's forget it! [*looking at his picture in the paper*] Doesn't this look like success and happiness? Look at that grin! Say, I never looked like that, did I?

BOB—[*taking paper*] Can't say you ever did! A whole column about you, eh? Gee, that's great! And the board of directors is going to give you a dinner!

CLEM—Yes! What do I want a dinner given *me* for! But I suppose it's all part of the game.

BOB—Sure! You said you were going to show me the drawings of your invention. Have you got them there?

CLEM—Yes. [*taking roll of blue-prints, opening it*] It doesn't look much on paper. You see this little jigger here? That's what the whole fuss is about. That's what cost me months of study and work. But fascinating——! Holy smoke, how the time slips away from you! The company says it's what they've been looking for for years. It just fits into the machine like a miracle and reduces the wear and tear one half.

BOB—Wonderful! And all out of that old top of yours! [*thumping CLEM's head*] Describe it to me.

CLEM—[*looking at his watch*] See here, I haven't time now. I'm late for an appointment as it is. Suppose I leave these here; you can look them over, and I'll come around tomorrow evening.

BOB—All right; I'll take care of them for you.

CLEM—[*rolls up the prints and tosses them on the bed*] So long, then. Eat hearty! [*indicating the bread and cheese*]

BOB—Thanks. So long. [CLEM goes out. BOB takes off his coat and shoes and puts on slippers. The sobbing next door recommences. It makes BOB nervous. He takes a plate, knife and glass out of one of the bureau drawers and puts them on the table. The sobbing continues. Unable to stand it any longer he pounds on the wall near the bed.] Say, won't you quit that, please? Please do, kid! [*The sobbing becomes hysterical.*] Oh, Lord! Here's a nice cheerful tune to eat supper by! Some cabaret stunt, all right! Listen here, Gracie!—Mamie!—Arabella!

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—*Mary!*—[*The sobbing ceases.*] Ah, ha! I thought I'd strike it! I'll come in there and get you if you don't look out. [*The sobs are spasmodic.*] I guess I'll come anyway and settle this. [*He goes out and is heard knocking.*] Come on, now, I won't hurt you.—Be a lady!—Come out here!—[*The sobbing ceases. BOB reappears, talking off.*] Come along and tell me all about it. I can't stand this every night. It gets on my nerves. Come in; I may be able to do something to help.

[*MARY CURTIS appears in the doorway, then reluctantly she follows BOB into the room. MARY is a young woman of twenty-three or so, very pale, and shabbily dressed. She has a refined, sweet face.*]

BOB—I'm no crook. I'm not going to hurt you.

MARY—[*her breath coming in gasps*] I'm not afraid. It—it isn't that. I—I just get so awful lonely in there at night—I can't stand it.

BOB—This is the first time I've had a good look at you. I thought you were a kid—[*MARY ejaculates "Kid!"*]—when I heard you bawling these last few nights, but I guess you're a woman grown with troubles of your own like the rest of us.

MARY—That's right. I've had troubles enough.

BOB—[*getting the bread and cheese, and arranging them on plates on the table*] You don't happen to be hungry or anything, do you? Because I'm having a party right now and you might like to stay to it, eh?

MARY—Hungry! [*She sways a trifle. BOB catches her, and seats her on the edge of the bed, then makes her lie down.*]

BOB—There now, you stay right there. [*He puts a slice of bread into her hand.*] I haven't got a blamed bit of booze in this shebang. Chew away on that till I get back. All right now, are you? [*MARY nods.*] You just keep quiet; I'll run down and get a drop of something to add to my party. Don't you worry; nobody'll be in. I'm not bothered with swell visitors at this time of night.

[*He goes out. MARY lies still a moment with closed eyes, munch-*

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ing the bread. The newspaper is under her head, it bothers her, she draws it out and pushes aside the roll of blue-prints. She raises herself a little and glances over the newspaper. She sees the picture of CLEM.]

MARY—Oh, Clem, Clem! [*Reads.*] “Young Inventor to be honored by Steel Company with banquet.” [*Her voice drops as she murmurs a few more words from the paper, then louder.*] Oh, Clem, I guess it’s good I didn’t stand in your way! [*There is a knock at the door. She cowers down, her face hidden.*]

CLEM—[*Outside.*] Hello, Bob! [*partially opening the door*] Can I come in? I forgot I’d need those prints tonight. I had to come back for them. I’ll let you—[*Realizing that BOB is not there, amused at himself, he enters.*] Hello, where are you? [*He goes to the bureau.*] Where did I leave them? [*Going toward the bed, he sees MARY.*] Well, I’ll be—! [*He stands transfixed at the foot of the bed. The roll of prints is out of his reach, near her head. She stirs.*] I’m sorry to disturb you, but would you mind handing me that roll of prints, if you’re not asleep? [*MARY fumbles blindly for the roll.*] Oh, no, that’s not where it is! [*a murmur from MARY*] All right, I’ll take them myself. [*Going to the side of the bed he reaches for the roll. A bit of her hair catches on his sleeve. He frees it, gazing fixedly at her. He hesitates, then goes to the door.*] Thanks, sorry to have disturbed you. [*Still looking back, puzzled, he runs into BOB, entering.*] Excuse me! I had no intention of butting in. My mistake! [*BOB protests.*] Oh, that’s all right! No explanations necessary. [*CLEM goes out hurriedly, leaving BOB speechless. He enters, carrying a bottle of “Tito” Chianti.*]

MARY—[*sitting up, gasping*] Oh, Oh, Oh!

BOB—It’s too bad you were disturbed, little girl. Never mind; I’ll have it out with him soon.

MARY—[*excitedly*] That’s my husband. Oh, Clem, Clem!

BOB—[*starting to the door*] Your husband?

MARY—[*springing up and catching him*] No, no, not yet! He must not see me yet.

BOB—Why not now? You could have it all over in a minute and be happy.

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MARY—Oh, you don't know! I must be sure that he wants me.

BOB—Wants you? Why, he's dying for you. Didn't he tell me that this very evening? [*He still tries to get to the door, but MARY prevents him.*] Oh, all right then, we'll wait! Come along, I'll tell you all about it. [*He makes her sit at the table.*] Let's see, where's my chair? [*He looks cautiously out into the hall.*] Seems to me I noticed it out here. [*He brings a wooden box in from the hall, and sits on it at the table.*] There now! Let's have our party while we discuss our troubles with light and airy persiflage, eh?

MARY—[*smiles, and begins to eat*] You're great on kidding, aren't you?

BOB—You bet! It makes life go easier.

MARY—That's true; but sometimes life gets so hard you *can't* smile.

BOB—Guess you've had it pretty hard, eh?

MARY—Um-hum!

BOB—Don't you feel like talking about it? It might do you good.

MARY—Maybe it would. It seems easy to talk to you. Here's something I want to show you. [*She draws a small photograph from the bosom of her gown, her eyes shining.*] This is my baby. Isn't he a darling? I guess I was foolish getting his picture taken, but that was two months ago when I had work, and it didn't cost much.

BOB—[*enthusiastically*] Gee! That's some baby, all right.

MARY—And he's the perfect image of Clem. [*wistfully*] Isn't he?

BOB—Oh, *sure!* I'm an expert on babies' likenesses! [*He makes a wry face, unseen by MARY.*] How old is he?

MARY—Six months.

BOB—And eight months ago you wandered out into the world thinking you could face it alone, eh, with this little chap?

MARY—Why, how did you know?

BOB—Oh, I know some things!

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MARY—But there's lots of things you don't know. There's *so much* men don't know!

BOB—Well, tell me some of them. Tell me what happened when you left home that night?

MARY—That night! Clem has told you!

BOB—I'm a "Wiz," I tell you. I know everything!

MARY—I think you do!

BOB—Well, go on anyway. I want to hear *you* tell about that night.

MARY—[*reminiscently, vaguely*] It was dark—and late—and *cold*. I sat so long in front of the fire that I don't remember when it went out. I only remember how long it seemed since I had seen Clem. He had been gone all day, since early morning. I had got up earlier than usual to give him his breakfast. When supper time came he sent word by a boy next door that he couldn't come yet; that he had to see a very important man. I didn't feel well that day. My head was all funny, and I couldn't think straight, and I began to think how nice it would be if I went to sleep and never woke up.

BOB—[*emphatically*] That's where you should have got up and gone to bed, and had a good sleep like a sensible girl.

MARY—Yes, that was what Clem was always telling me. But, you see, he didn't understand how I felt.

BOB—Then what happened?

MARY—I forget. But the people that I went to told me that I must have put a few of my clothes in a bag, because I had them with me. The next thing I remember I was lying down by the water near the lake. I guess I must have fainted. I—I sat there for awhile—and—and—I crept back into some shrubbery because I heard a policeman go by. Then I could remember everything, and I was ashamed to think I had run away. I thought I had better end it right there. Then I thought of Baby, and how wicked it would be to take away its little life without its having a chance to say if it

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wanted to live. But I didn't want to go back. Clem didn't want me. His business meant more to him. So I just sat there, and by and by morning came, and I knew what to do.

BOB—What was that?

MARY—I went straight to the milliner's where I used to work, and she was awful kind to me. I told her all about it, and I found out she was unhappy too. She promised to let me stay there, and wouldn't ever tell. I could sit in the back room and work on the hats, and nobody except two of the girls ever knew I was there. I could do a lot of work, you see. It was easy for me because I was an old hand at it. Then sometimes I cooked her dinner for her when she was tired.

BOB—And *you* weren't ever tired, I suppose?

MARY—[*simply*] Yes, I was always tired. But then, you know how it is, you don't always have *time* to be.

BOB—Yes, I know! Same as some men don't have time to be kind!

MARY—I guess they mean to be, but they don't know!

BOB—Go on, I'm interrupting your story.

MARY—It was all right till Baby came. My friend was so good, but afterward it wasn't so easy to work, and it was hard keeping Baby in the little back room. Then my friend got sick and I couldn't stay there in the way. She felt awful bad about it, and got one of her rich customers to put Baby into a home where they take care of 'em for just a little paid in every week. Then I got work for awhile in the shirt factory but, you know the strike's been on for three weeks, and—and—oh, I've been looking everywhere but I can't find anything to do! Sometimes I try to get housework, but I haven't any references, and when I go into a house where they don't ask for references they are so awful mean. [*She sinks her head on her hands.*]

BOB—So you got the blue jim-jams, eh?

MARY—And, oh, I did want Clem to see Baby!

BOB—Why didn't you go back?

MARY—How could I, and me leaving as I did? Besides I did

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creep back one night, late, and hung around awhile, but the house was dark, no sign of anybody, so I just came away again.

BOB—Didn't it ever strike you that you were treating Clem unkindly?

MARY—Yes. I hated to think of that. But then I thought maybe it was best, because when I came away I didn't know I was doing it, and perhaps he wanted to be rid of me anyway, so he could spend all his time on his work.

BOB—You see that's where you made a mistake.

MARY—I didn't know. How could I know! It's a queer way to love a person, to stay away from them all the time!

BOB—He realizes that now.

MARY—*[pushing aside her plate]* Tell me what he said.

BOB—His success in business now means nothing to him. He is "soured on the world," to use his own expression. And why? Because he has lost *you*!

MARY—Ah, did he say that? Are you sure?

BOB—Sure thing! In this very room not half an hour ago. You heard us come in, because you stopped short in that cabaret stuff you were pulling off.

MARY—Oh, don't!

BOB—Never mind, little girl, you run along now and dream about tomorrow. You leave it to me; we'll have the grand finale all right. Family reunion and all that stuff!

MARY—I can't believe it's true! How long have you known Clem?

BOB—Only a few months. Come to think of it, it must have been very soon after you took that evening walk, that I ran across him at "Coffee Dan's." Of all the glum individuals he was the worst ever! I sort of took it on myself to jolly him along.

MARY—Didn't he ever say anything about me then?

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BOB—Not a peep out of him! I kept meeting him around different places, you know how it is; we fellows never talk much about personal affairs unless we run plumb up against it.

MARY—What made him tell you tonight?

BOB—Well I pinned him right down to it. He's been coming to me lately more and more. I taxed him with a grouch and he came through with it. You see, success doesn't mean much to him now.

MARY—*[picks up the paper]* Poor Clem! And it's wonderful what he has done. Oh, I was the selfish one!

BOB—Not on your life! Don't take it that way. There's no invention in the world worth a little woman like you, and he's found it out!

MARY—Oh, do you think so?

BOB—Sure! *[A sharp knock on the door startles them. CLEM's voice is heard. "Can I come in? Bob, I must speak to you!" BOB starts up, MARY catches hold of him, imploring.]*

MARY—Oh, no, no! Not now!

BOB—Yes, it's best now. *[He opens the door; CLEM enters. MARY shrinks back a little but faces him bravely.]*

CLEM—Mary! *[furiously, looking from one to the other]* I knew it when I saw you there! *[pointing to bed]* Something pulled me right back here. Oh, you, you——! *[BOB tries to restrain him.]*

MARY—Yes, I'm here because——

CLEM—Shut up! Don't invent any lies; I'm no fool. So this is where you've been while I was eating my heart out and searching the town for you!

MARY—Clem, dear, listen!

CLEM—"No fool," I said. That's not true. I'm a damned fool ever to have trusted a woman!

BOB—Clem, listen!

MARY—Clem, Clem, I didn't know! You never told me you

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needed me. You were always busy. I could never do anything for you, you always——

CLEM—What does it matter what you thought or what I thought? I find you *here!* And Bob “didn’t know anything about women,” oh, no!

BOB—You’re mistaken. Listen to me.

MARY—I never spoke to him until tonight.

CLEM—You think I’m “easy,” don’t you, to believe that?

MARY—It’s the truth, Clem, I swear——

BOB—Leave him to me, Mary.

CLEM—Seems to know your name all right! [*sneering*] Yes, “leave it to him, Mary!” I’ll soon fix you both. [*He whips out a revolver and covers BOB. MARY runs in front of BOB, stretching out her arms to protect him, and facing CLEM.*]

BOB—[*trying to force her away*] No, no! Think of your boy.

MARY—[*will not step aside*] I *am* thinking of my boy. His father must not be a murderer.

CLEM—[*his hand drops*] A murderer!

MARY—I’ve never seen this man before tonight. I don’t even know his name. He is your friend, yet you are ready to shoot him down without a word. Very well, shoot him through my body! [*Her clear gaze disarms CLEM. He drops the revolver and sinks on the bed, his head bowed on the foot of it, half sobbing.*]

BOB—[*manages to force MARY into the chair*] I told you I didn’t know anything about women, Clem! [*He picks up the revolver and places it on the bureau.*]

MARY—[*going to CLEM*] If you want me back, Clem, I’ll come. You are the man I love. But I never would have come if it hadn’t been for your friend here.

CLEM—[*brokenly*] But you went away——you went away!

BOB—She went away, yes. In her loneliness she wandered

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away, not knowing what she did. She worked, suffered, she starved! While you——

CLEM—[*fiercely, springing up*] I suffered too!

BOB—Yes, in your selfish, well-fed pride, you suffered. What was that in comparison?

MARY—Don't! We've both been wrong. Clem, dear, this man says he doesn't know anything about women, but he knows something better. He understands human feelings. He has shown us both where we were wrong.—[*She slips her hand into CLEM's.*] May Baby and I come home?

CLEM—[*catches her in his arms*] You first, Mary! Just you! [MARY *freed herself, takes the baby's photo from her gown and holds it up for CLEM to see. He is astonished.*] A—a boy did you say? [She *nods.*] When may I see him?

MARY—Tomorrow! [CLEM *catches her in his arms, while BOB, with a whimsical look toward them, ostentatiously clears away the plates.*]



WHEN LOVE IS BLIND • *A Comedy*

*Lend me thy fillet, Love,
I would no longer see;
Cover mine eyelids close awhile,
And make me blind like thee!*

.....

*Lend her thy fillet, Love,
Let her no longer see!
If there is hope for me at all,
She must be blind like thee!*

EDWARD ROWLAND SILL.

[CHARACTERS]

ROSE ELLISTON, who has been blind for six years.

KENNETH ROSS, an artist; her fiancé.

[SCENE]

The Ellistons' living-room. It is comfortably furnished. There is a table down left on which are books and ornaments, also two photographs of Rose and Kenneth. Chairs are right and left of the table. A small chair is down right, and a large chair up right center. A large mirror hangs up right. A small hassock is right center, and a couch up left. The entrances are an arch-way at center with portières and a door at left.

It is mid-afternoon at the present time.



WHEN LOVE IS BLIND • *A Comedy*

ENTER KENNETH ROSS, C. *He is a man of thirty, and is handsome enough to justify the references made to his good looks in the dialogue. He carries a bunch of flowers and a box of candy. He places the box on the table and arranges the flowers carefully in a vase on the table, talking meanwhile to Rose's photograph which he places in close proximity to the flowers.]*

KENNETH—There! I hope those will please your ladyship! At any rate they'll help me through the trying ordeal. [*He draws the large chair forward and places the hassock in front of it.*] There's your throne, my Queen-Rose, where you may pass judgment on your stricken subject! [*He places a small, straight-backed chair at left, near the large one.*] That will do, I suppose, for the prisoner's box. I need something stiff and bracing! Pity I'm not a drinking man!—Nonsense!—Why am I taking it all so seriously! [*taking up the photograph*] After two years of faith, dear, why should I doubt you now?

[*Enter ROSE ELLISTON, C. She comes in quietly. She is slight and very sweet-looking. One sees that she has pretty hair, becomingly dressed, but her other features are partially obscured by the bandage she wears over her eyes and tied at the back of her head.*]

[*KENNETH feels her presence, goes to meet her, takes her hand and leads her to the large chair.*]

KENNETH—Queen-Rose!

ROSE—[*nervously*] Please excuse my keeping you waiting, Kenneth, but I only this moment heard you were here.

KENNETH—You knew what suspense I would be in, didn't you? [*He seats her in the chair, and places the hassock carefully.*]

ROSE—[*surprised*] How very careful you are of me today! I'm not sick.

KENNETH—[*whimsically*] No, I suppose not; but *I* am, may it please your royal highness!

WHEN LOVE IS BLIND

ROSE—[*anxiously*] Oh, what is the matter? And why should it please me, you silly boy?

KENNETH—[*laughing nervously*] Mine is an affection of the heart, not necessarily dangerous, but very wearing while it lasts! [*leaning over the back of her chair*] Oh, you cruel little judge! Have you any idea what an ordeal you are putting me through when you sit there so calmly waiting to pass judgment on me?

ROSE—[*excitedly*] Calmly, do you say? Am I to have no credit then for controlling my feelings? When you talk of the ordeal of a moment, are my six years of suspense to count for nothing? Oh, Kenneth, think what they've meant to me! The gradual fading away of the light, the sunshine and the flowers—all the dear faces of those I loved! Then when the dreadful darkness came, the thought that so it must be all through my life! Then—you came, and brought so much light and happiness to me that at first I thought my trial counted for nothing. But was it nothing, do you think, to hear your voice, to feel your presence near me, and never to catch even a glimpse of your face? Ah, when you talk of ordeals, you don't know—you don't know! [*She hides her face.*]

KENNETH—[*conscience-stricken, strokes her hair*] Forgive me, dear! You have always seemed so happy since I've known you that I've not realized the depth of the trial you have been through. Then—all the past year you've had the hope of regaining your eyesight.

ROSE—Yes, but—[*sitting up suddenly*]—what are you doing over here, sir? I wish you to stay over there in that chair. [*She points vaguely. KENNETH sits in the straight chair L, with mock humility.*] They were never sure of the operation's being successful, you know, but they always hoped, and I hoped too. And now—[*standing up excitedly*] now I am going to see—see! The sunshine and the flowers, my dear father and mother whom I haven't seen for six long years! [*KENNETH goes to her.*] And—and—you! [*shrinking from him*]

KENNETH—[*with repression*] And—me! So I come last?

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ROSE—[*rallying*] Ah, no—not last! Haven't I chosen to see you first? Was it wrong, do you think? No, I think they understand.

KENNETH—Yes, they understand. Was it only yesterday you told me that my face was the first you wished to see when the dark bandages were taken off which have hid your sweet eyes so long from the light? It seems an eternity.

ROSE—[*shivering nervously*] Oh, these last twenty-four hours!

KENNETH—[*lightly*] And how much longer, may I ask, are you going to keep me in suspense? Your experience should make you more lenient toward the trials of others!

ROSE—[*in a spoiled-child tone*] Papa says I'm about as "spoiled as they make 'em," so I'm going to keep you on the anxious seat just as long as I choose! [*She goes toward him.*] Let me feel what chair you are sitting on. [KENNETH *sits quickly in the straight chair.*] Good and *straight*—and *hard*? [*running her fingers over the back of the chair*] Yes, that's all right.

KENNETH—[*folds his arms with a resigned air*] Oh, it's hard enough! One of those company chairs your mother keeps for people whom she doesn't wish to stay long. She never makes *me* sit in it! [*reproachfully*]

ROSE—I'm quite aware that mother is very fond of you. She is continually telling me what a fortunate girl I am.

KENNETH—[*quizzically*] Well, aren't you?

ROSE—Of course I am! And in the intervals of hearing of my own *overwhelming* good fortune, [*making a profound curtsy*] I am continually informing her that *you* are not altogether unlucky yourself!

KENNETH—[*starting up*] Unlucky, Rose? What are you saying?

ROSE—*Sit down!* [*listening until he sits*] There, there, did his good luck go to his head? But really, you know, it is very dangerous having a person's virtues held up before one all the time. It wouldn't be any wonder if I hated you instead of
—er—

KENNETH—Instead of—er—? Continue, please!

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ROSE—Instead of—*standing you the way I do!* That's one proof positive I have that you are real nice and homely, because homely people are *always* good!

KENNETH—[*uncomfortably*] That's rather a sweeping assertion, isn't it?

ROSE—Well—there are a few *wicked* homely ones, I suppose, to prove the rule! [*standing in front of him*] But I don't see how you can be as homely as you say you are when you have such a nice nose! [*running her forefinger lightly down his nose*]

KENNETH—[*laughing and catching her hand*] Not having been born blind your sense of touch has not become much more strongly developed than the other four. Otherwise you would have been convinced long ago. Just wait till you see it! Ye gods!

ROSE—[*running her fingers over his face*] Are you quite sure you are very ugly, Ken?

KENNETH—[*solemnly*] As ugly as *I* can be! Perhaps my capability in that line may not come up to your expectations. To be sure my nose hasn't a "Cyrano" bump, neither did I have the good luck to be born cross-eyed, but *you* may discover points of ugliness in me that I never dreamed I possessed.

ROSE—Now you are laughing at me. Never mind, young sir! "He who laughs last," you know! It's really a serious matter with me. I cannot *abide* a handsome man.

KENNETH—Believe me, I shall never be barred from your favor on that account, however far I may fall below your standards in other matters. But you took me on faith and you'll have to keep me. "Love is blind," you know!

ROSE—Yes, I know. Too blind sometimes! [*She walks away, sniffing.*] What do I smell that is so sweet? [*Going to the table she feels the flowers.*] Oh, my roses, how lovely they are! You dear things—I'm going to see you in a little while! [*She finds the candy box.*] Candy too! You extravagant man! When are you going to begin to save up your pennies for the rainy days that are sure to come?

KENNETH—They'll never be more than April showers let us hope.

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ROSE—They'll have to be brief to correspond with your pennies I'm thinking! But never mind, it's so nice to be poor!

KENNETH—Might a stricken subject inquire what experience the queen of this realm has had along the lines of poverty?

ROSE—I have had so much of the other thing that I positively think a little grinding poverty would be refreshing for a change. It *is* so tiresome to get everything you want for the asking—just by putting out your hand! [*suiting her words by a gesture*]

KENNETH—[*promptly putting his hand in hers*] There's one thing you didn't get for the asking. Very important too!

ROSE—[*retreating with her hands behind her*] That does sort of balance things, doesn't it? [*airily*] I have got so into the habit of taking things, however, that I suppose I took you as a matter of course, along with the rest!

KENNETH—It's fortunate for me, under those circumstances, that I arrived first.

ROSE—Oh, there wouldn't have been very many! Not many men would want to be burdened with an ugly old blind wife.

KENNETH—Come, come, I can't allow any such remarks about my future wife! Why do you insist upon making yourself out so ugly? That doesn't speak very well for my good taste.

ROSE—[*pompously*] It must have been my superior intellect, of course, that attracted you. The triumph of mind over matter. You've seen by my pictures what a thin, *hopeless* little girl I was. To be sure Mama would console me by telling me that sometimes ugly ducklings turned into swans; but I must say I don't feel very swan-like! [*flapping her arms up and down*]

KENNETH—You don't mean to say you've not seen yourself yet? What marvelous self-denial! Not even one little peep in the glass?

ROSE—Not a peep! Didn't I say that you were to be first? It was a temptation, though, when my hair was being brushed,

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not to look. I had to sit with my back to the mirror and my eyes tight shut, I was so afraid I might turn around by mistake.

KENNETH—Just think now, how much time you are wasting! You might have been quite well acquainted with your own face by this time, and mine too!

ROSE—Mine will not interest me much if you have been deceiving me about yours.

KENNETH—[*stirring uneasily*] Do you know what you will see when you look in the glass? Instead of a swan, a nice little white goose! Of all the absurd notions I have ever heard, that is the worst! To object to a man because of his good looks! Why, most girls think of that first.

ROSE—Indeed they do not! That's a man's idea of girls. Handsome men are apt to be vain and frivolous, and amount to nothing at all, because they must always be thinking of themselves. Besides it would never do for you to be too nice looking for poor little dowdy me! I like to think that no one would have you but just me.

KENNETH—[*amused*] Oh, then you took me out of pity, did you? Let us have no question of looks between you and me. Come, off with the bandage! Remember, I have never had a good look at your eyes. Who knows? I may not be at all pleased with them. What then?

ROSE—Oh, you can't frighten me that way! I would just tie them up again when you were around. Why don't you sing: "Lend me thy fillet, Love, and make me blind like thee!"?

KENNETH—I would if I could! [ROSE sits again in the large chair.] Rose! [He rises determinedly, and goes to her.]

ROSE—[*startled*] Yes?

KENNETH—Today may be the turning point in our lives. We must leave nothing untold between us. There is something I must tell you. I should have told you before, but—

ROSE—[*nervously*] Kenneth! What is it?

KENNETH—Nothing to startle you, dear, only this. You have

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taken pleasure in believing me poor—in thinking that your money was to take care of us by and by—but——

ROSE—But what? [*starting up*]

KENNETH—My only claim to being “poor and struggling” lies in the quality of my work, I fear. My pictures are slow to sell, but in the meantime we shall not starve.

ROSE—Then you’re not poor, but rich? Oh, Kenneth, and I trusted you so!

KENNETH—I’m afraid that my father left me quite “comfortably off.”

ROSE—[*sits dolefully in the big chair*] And I was to take care of the studio, and cook our little meals in the chafing-dish, and perhaps once a week we would have chicken for a treat—and——and I was to do all that while you worked and studied and grew famous.

KENNETH—You shall do all that and more. And I shall study and work. As for becoming famous, the ungrateful world does not always give genius such as mine its due! [*with an ironical shrug*]

ROSE—Is——is there anything else? But that is enough. [*rising*] I am so nervous! I don’t think I’ll take off the bandage today.

KENNETH—[*imploringly*] Rose!

ROSE—[*shrinking from him*] I’m——I’m afraid of you. You seem different today. Let me wait until tomorrow.

KENNETH—Another eternity, Rose? Come, be sensible. You are not at all like yourself. I am the same man you have trusted for two years. Surely it is myself you care for and not my looks nor my possible fortune!

ROSE—How can I be myself when everything is going to be different? I——thought I knew you [*imploringly*] but I can not tell how it will be with me. Suppose I don’t like you after all! Oh, Kenneth! [*She turns away from him. Pause.*]

KENNETH—[*in a hurt, repressed voice*] I didn’t know it was a question of liking.

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ROSE—[*turning quickly*] Forgive me! You can't know what it is, to be emerging suddenly from the shadows. It frightens me. [*She goes to the big chair and leans against it, nervously.*] Stay there, please! [*She begins to untie the bandage.*]

KENNETH—Shall I help you?

ROSE—No, no! Stay where you are! [*She takes off the bandage slowly, keeping her eyes turned from him, and shading them from the light until they become accustomed to it. Then she faces him.*]

KENNETH—[*smiles and stretches out his hand*] "Lend me thy fillet, Love!"

ROSE—[*gazes at him in silence, her expression of curiosity changing to one of displeasure and bewilderment. Turning away with a gesture of dislike she leans her head upon her arms on the back of the chair.*]

KENNETH—[*impulsively going toward her*] Rose! My Queen-Rose!

ROSE—Don't touch me!—Don't come near me! [*She begins to sob. KENNETH walks up and down nervously. She keeps her face hid, and when he comes near her she shrinks away.*] You're—you're not at all what I thought you. You're—not a bit ugly—and you're glad that you're not. You've been treating me like a child all this time, telling me fibs—and—

KENNETH—[*for the first time becoming impatient*] If you act like a silly child, Rose, you should be treated like one.

ROSE—I am not silly! If you deceive me in little things you will in the more important ones. I could never trust you in anything!

KENNETH—I'm sorry that my conduct toward you has not been worthy of trust! [*He walks back and forth.*]

ROSE—[*peeping at him when his back is turned, but hiding her face again when he comes toward her*] You have thought it a good joke, I suppose, to take such an advantage of me. If you treat me so now, how will it be when we are married?

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KENNETH—[*intensely, going to her*] This is more than I can stand. Do you know what you are saying? For God's sake, Rose, don't try me too far!

ROSE—[*frightened*] I—I never knew before that you had a temper!

KENNETH—[*with repressed anger*] Yes—I have a temper, and I've held it in check long enough. Am I a stone that I should give no sign when you trample on my most sacred feelings?

ROSE—[*breathlessly*] Kenneth!

KENNETH—You have thought nothing of *my* feelings during all this time of suspense. Has it been nothing to me, do you think? Nothing to be criticised and pulled to pieces according to a girl's foolish whim?—Perhaps my idol has fallen too—who can say?

ROSE—[*imploringly*] Kenneth!

KENNETH—[*restraining himself, formally*] If your feelings have undergone such a change toward me it must be painful to you to prolong this interview. I shall leave you to reason it out for yourself. I think that when you have looked back over the past year and realized all the happiness it has held for us you will not allow a foolish whim to destroy it.—If you send for me when you have decided I will come. If you have found any good reason for breaking our engagement I suppose I shall have to accept it. [*There is a pause in which he gazes down at her sadly.*] Good-by! Good-by! [*He goes out C, forgetting to take his hat.*]

ROSE—[*remains in the same attitude for a short time, then raises her head and wipes her eyes. She looks toward the door in a startled way.*] Good-by? [*faintly*] Good-by, Kenneth?—Was it my Kenneth who spoke like that to me? [*She goes to the portieres and looks off, then comes slowly back to the table.*] What am I to do now? Oh, that I might be blind again!

[*She sits at right of the table, and buries her face in her hands. Tableau curtain, or dark stage, for one minute, during which a woman's voice is heard singing:*]

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"Lend me thy fillet, Love,
I would no longer see;
Cover mine eyelids close awhile,
And make me blind like thee!

Lend *her* thy fillet, Love,
Let her no longer see;
If there is hope for me at all,
She must be blind like thee!
She must be blind like thee!

(Music by Kate Douglas Wiggin.)

[ROSE is discovered wandering about the room gazing wonderingly at everything.]

ROSE—Was it true?—Was it true that I behaved like a silly child?—How strange it seems, this room!—Perhaps he thought it would make me happier to deceive me, and humor me in everything, till I'm tired of myself and of everything else. [coming to the table] Oh, here are my roses! [She puts her arms impulsively around them.] Dear, dear flowers! You are only one of the kind thoughts he has had for me—and I have sent him away! [snatching up KENNETH's photograph] His picture! I remember when he had it taken last year for mother. —What clear eyes! They seem to see right through me. [slowly] I think if I had those eyes to help me I might be good. —And I have had them—for two years, "The very eyes of me!" [She takes up her own picture.] I suppose this is *me*! [examining it closely] How silly I look with my eyes cast down! [She walks slowly about the room comparing the two pictures.] It's rather nice-looking though. Certainly better than two ugly old frumps. [She suddenly finds herself in front of the mirror. Startled, she gazes at her reflection.] So you are Rose Elliston!—The blind girl—blind in more ways than one! [smiling and nodding into the mirror] I had no idea how nice I was. [She compares KENNETH's picture with her own reflection.] Why should I be selfish and want to monopolize all the good looks in the family? A little goose he said I would see. More than that—a big idiot, not to know when I was well off! [to his picture] Why, I know you better already. I

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wish you would come back! You said you would come if I sent for you. [*She puts the photographs on the table, and sees KENNETH's hat where he has left it on the chair near. She joyfully catches it up, caressing it, then stealthily hides it beneath the couch cushions, very much pleased with herself. She looks timidly through the portières, then goes out L.*]

[*Enter KENNETH, C. He hesitates until he sees that the room is empty. He searches vainly for his hat.*]

KENNETH—Where the dickens?—I'm going to have about the best mother-in-law a man ever had! [*taking up ROSE's picture*] She says I must be patient, dear, and leave you to yourself a little while. [*sitting despondently at right of the table*] How long will it be, my Queen-Rose?

[*Enter ROSE, L. She comes quietly forward, hesitating, looking at KENNETH first from one side then from the other. Catching sight of the bandage on the big chair where she has left it she snatches it up and quickly slips it over his eyes, tying it and singing, gaily:*]

“Lend him thy fillet, Love,
Let him no longer see!
If there be chance for me at all,
He must be blind like thee!
He must be blind like thee!”

KENNEHT—[*Starts, then puts up his hands and catches hers. She frees herself and runs back to the portières, where she stands watching him while he takes off the bandage. He speaks seriously.*] What does this mean, Rose?

ROSE—[*smiling nervously*] It means—it means—that there is a blindness more dense than that of the eyes, Kenneth, and it has lain on my soul too long. But, if you can forgive—you can lead me away from it—into the light—of your love! [*She stretches out her hand.*] Come, mother is waiting for us!

[KENNETH kisses her hand, and together they disappear through the portières.]

NO. 1000
ANNEXED

EPILOGUE

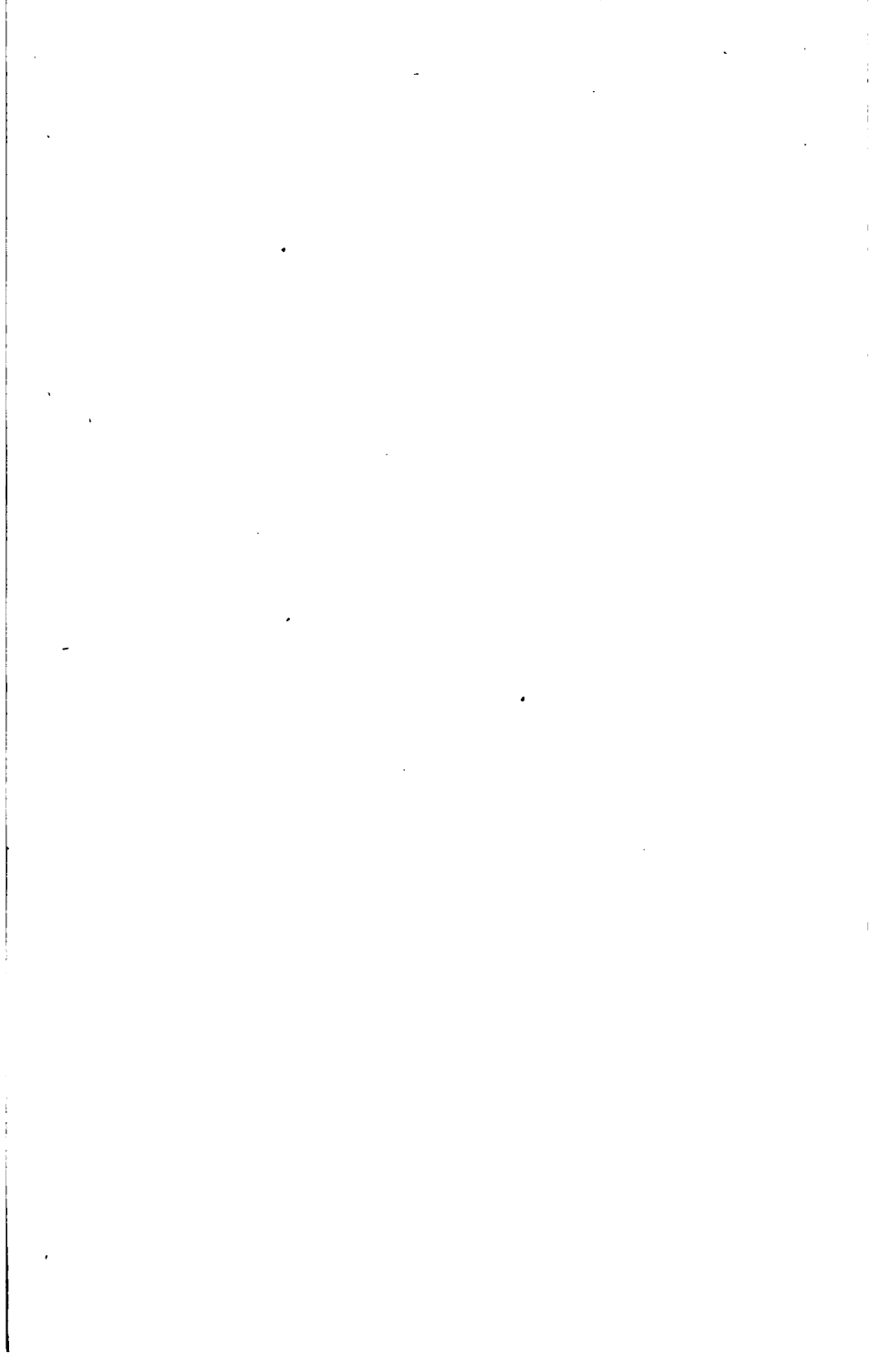
Reader, are you a trifle more complete than you were in human experience?

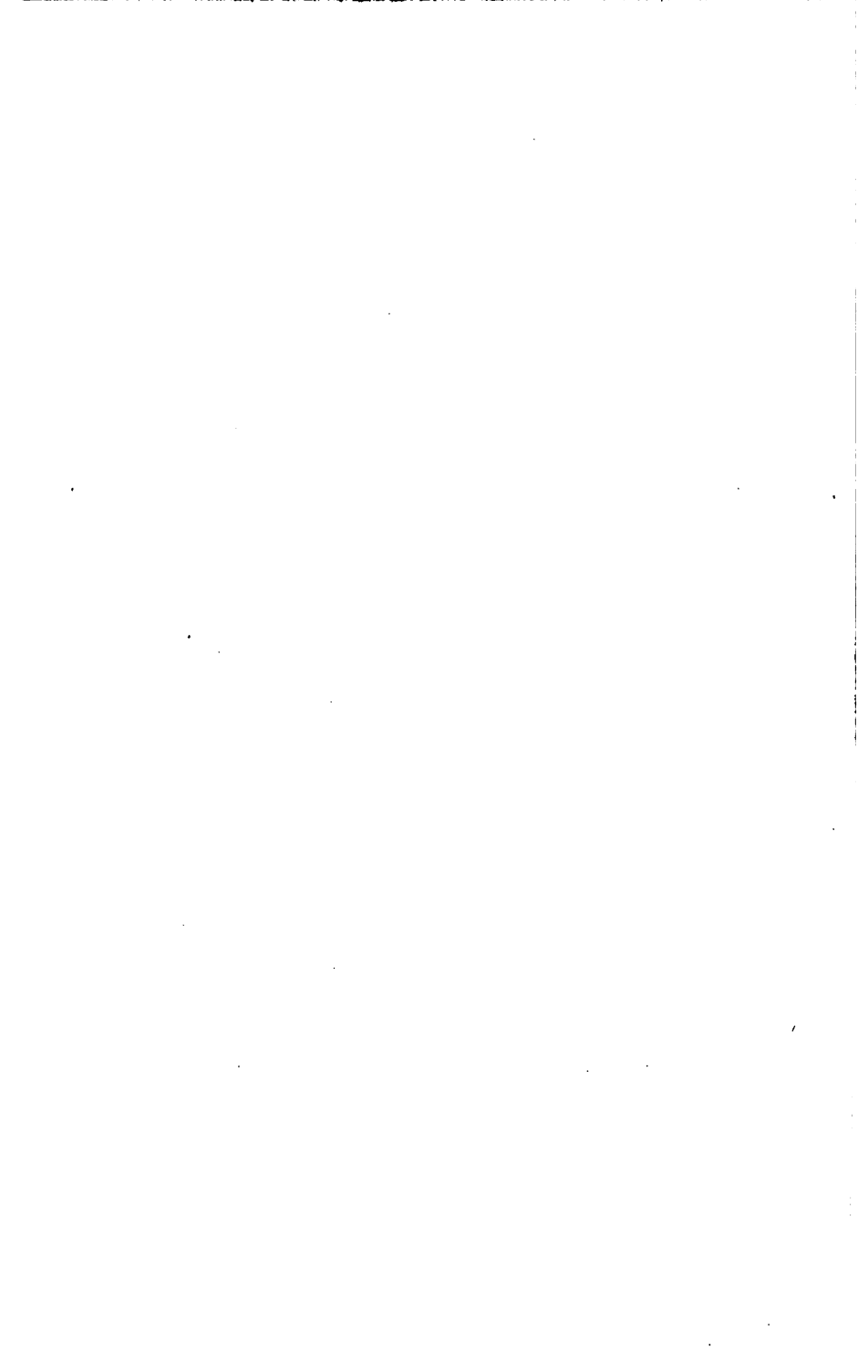
Actor, have you lived, and given of your knowledge as you promised when this partnership was formed?

If so the venture has been successful, and the third partner is satisfied.

Go back to your mountains, you characters who came down the rocky trails at our bidding. Pull down the shades in the living-rooms, so that we cannot peep in. Lock the door of the poor hall bedroom, draw the curtains in the gilded café. For a little while we have shared your lives, and you gave us nothing but the truth. We thank you, and let you go. The curtain is down! Encouraged we start forth to find material for another square of patch-work!

H. H. H.





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